THE CATHARS

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A CIVILISATION CUT SHORT.
THE OUTLINE OF A FUTURE N SOCIETY

Catharism is still largely unknown to the general public. Yet, in Western history, it constitutes a unique case in many respects.

We can study the Cathar phenomenon from two very different angles: as heresy or as an original civilisation. Heresy *flourished* in many European countries. But Catharism, as a civilisation or, at least, as the consummate spiritual expression of a specific civilisation, with its own culture, customs, laws, etc., developed primarily in Occitania.

There were many Cathars in Italy, but they constituted minority groups, and were therefore a marginal phenomenon. In the South of France, Cathar doctrine and way of life reflected the soul, the profound sensibility of an entire people. It was the spontaneous, natural product of a certain way of seeing and feeling the world, characteristic of that Occitan society so different from what, at the time, could be called French society and which concerned only the north of the country.

In this respect, Catharism foreshadows certain forms of Protestantism which, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, would constitute both a spiritual revolt against Rome and the most fitting religious expression of the temperament of certain peoples. And in the religious wars that would ravage the whole of Renaissance Europe, we shall find spiritual, political and social elements closely intertwined.

From this perspective, the history of Catharism presents itself as a long struggle to the death between two civilisations: those of the north and south of present-day France![1] At Montségur, the persecuted called their enemies 'the French'; they believed they belonged to another nation, another civilisation.

Catharism is extraordinarily distinct from Catholicism. It is, in fact, much more than a mere heresy or a disagreement over one or more points of theology; it stems from a worldview, from an intellectual and spiritual process completely opposed to those of traditional Christianity, or perhaps even to Christianity itself. For such an original religion to have taken shape, there had to be a favourable social environment, an original civilisation.

Recently, we witnessed an entire civilisation—perhaps demonic, but undoubtedly different from anything we had known—form, develop and collapse—in less than fifteen years—in the Apocalypse of Berlin in May 1945.

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[1] The Cathars had a national language, 'the langue d'oc', as different from French or 'the langue d'oxl' as Italian or Spanish.

Catharism lasted longer, and it is not possible to attribute a demonic nature to it. Yet its downfall represents the destruction of an entire civilisation, the stifling of a culture and a way of life which, had they been allowed to flourish, would probably have given rise to a nation as distinct from northern France as Spain or Italy. The course of world history would certainly have been altered.

It is, therefore, this civilisation—unfortunately all too brief—that we shall attempt to revive—its political history, its philosophical thought, its morals, its customs, and so on—always placing it within the context of the era and linking it, as far as possible, to the various currents that contributed to its formation.

Often cited as one of the most direct origins of Catharism, Bogomilism[2]had, from the 10th century onwards in Bulgaria, under the reign of Peter I (927–929), taken on the character of a revolutionary movement against the boyars or the high-ranking dignitaries of the Church, who were regarded, with a few exceptions, as accomplices of the Devil. This was not the case in Languedoc, where Catharism spread in the 13th century across all classes of society and found supporters in both castles and huts. The minor knights, often ruined, felt more solidarity with the peasantry or the urban bourgeoisie than with their own class and did not in any way fear—assuming they foresaw them—the social consequences of the moral revolution that Catharism seemed to herald. Many of them, outraged by the behaviour of certain Roman priests, sincerely embraced the heresy. On the eve of the Crusade (1209), they frequently sought financial aid from the Good Men[3] . Widows and daughters, who often found themselves destitute, found refuge and protection in the sect's houses. In almost all the noble families of this period — particularly in the viscounty of Carcassonne — there was at least one 'believer', male or female. There are even
'perfects' belonging to the high nobility. When these provincial noblemen were not believers, they were at least anticlerical, and their active sympathy always lay with the 'Good Men'—often relatives or friends—who were as poor as they were and whose lives were beyond reproach.

The great lords — despite the outward allegiance they displayed towards the Catholic Church — were even more anti-clerical, but for other reasons. Catharism served, for them, as a pretext to overcome the tyranny of Rome. They enjoyed being able to repudiate their wives whenever they wished; to go to war whenever they pleased, without respecting the 'Truce of God'; to maintain, for this purpose, bands of armed men who ravaged the country; and, as they were by no means anti-Semitic, they did not hesitate to employ Jews and to entrust them with posts in which they had authority over Christians: acts which the Roman Church would have prohibited had it had the power to do so. And, naturally, having confiscated ecclesiastical property and tithes or imposed their control on the abbeys, they deemed

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[2] A movement of Manichaean origin, undoubtedly linked to the Zoroastrianism of ancient Persia.

[3] The Cathars called the 'Good Men' the perfect ones, the only ones who had received the *consolamentum.* See Appendices.

had nothing more to fear than the restoration of Catholic authority. It was, therefore, out of self-interest that they spared Catharism.

Women seemed, on the whole, more attached to the heresy, because they felt, albeit vaguely, that it conferred greater dignity and freedom upon their sex. And, indeed, it was often social interests that drew women from all social classes to Catharism. Within the limits of the possibilities offered by their respective classes, heterodox practices granted them, to a considerable extent, rights equal to those of men. 'Although the barriers of patriarchy,' writes M. Koch[4], 'had not been entirely removed within the Cathar women's communities, since the spiritual leadership of the convents remained largely in the hands of the deacons, the rights and freedoms of the Perfects were, nevertheless, far more considerable than within Roman institutions of the same kind. The convents were financed by donations from the faithful and by the labour of the community members... There was, therefore, no organisation dedicated to helping poor women and girls. Those who worked in the textile trade—or in similar industries—and who were particularly exploited, often sought refuge and protection in Cathar community establishments."

The division of fiefdoms (resulting from the distribution of the estate in equal shares amongst all the children) had increased in the 13th century and plunged the lesser nobility into a kind of permanent economic crisis that made it difficult to provide dowries for young women. It was because they often found themselves without the means of support befitting their rank that many of them were taken in as 'perfects' in heretical houses. As is evident, these houses were subject to the authority of bishops and deacons, but this was a moral authority, without constraints or imposed discipline, and it applied equally to men. The perfects could not rise to the higher ranks of the hierarchy, the diaconate and the episcopate, but they had the same rights and could administer the *consolamentum*[5] . Believers bowed before them and 'worshipped them': they were indwelt by the Spirit, just like the Good Men. Until the mid-13th century, they even had the right to preach, though they rarely exercised it; their role consisted essentially of educating girls and the sick, and of contributing to the prosperity of their small-scale crafts.

Misogyny had not entirely disappeared from Catharism, but the doctrine taught not only that souls, being sexless, were equal, but also that reincarnation transformed men into women as well as women into men. Gender equality in the Middle Ages was always more mythical than real. Nevertheless, it remains true that Catharism positively favoured, in religious life, marriage and customs, the tendencies

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[4] M. Koch: *Frauenfrage und Ketzertum im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1926).

[5] It was spiritual baptism, through the laying on of hands, which the Cathars regarded as the only true baptism.

egalitarian and liberating tendencies that were beginning to manifest themselves among all women, and above all in the aristocratic class.

When war broke out, most of the southern princes were compelled, by the force of events, to rely on the heretics to defend their rights. King Peter of Aragon[6]himself, though a devout Catholic, was ultimately forced, by the chain of political events, to come to the aid of the Count of Toulouse.

All these interests, all these conflicting calculations, concealed from their contemporaries the fact that Cathar heresy was, in itself, hardly compatible with the feudal system. It is true that in Languedoc, the feudal system was already greatly weakened: non-noble landownership and the power of money stood, in a sense, in contrast to the aristocratic principle that the land belongs to the lords and can only be granted as a usufruct in return for a service of 'honour'. The influence of the consuls and the bourgeoisie had increased considerably in the towns... The crusaders from the North, more astute than the southern barons, would hasten, after their victory, to restore the economic and social order desired by the Church, which Catharism had not had the opportunity to alter significantly.

In reality, Catharism is, at its core, almost as opposed to feudal values as Bogomilism was. For the Cathars, too, princes, barons and bishops were the representatives of the order of Evil. Without wishing to reduce metaphysical dualism to a purely social dualism, we must recognise that everything constituting the strength of feudalism was condemned by the Cathars. One of their prayers alludes to the satanic nature of the vassal hierarchy and of the whole of society based on the forced subordination of one man to another: the emperor commands the king, the king the count, the count the knight; all strive to subjugate their neighbour, as happens in hunting when one animal is used to hunt another, the falcon, for example. At the bottom of the ladder, the humblest bear the weight of the entire hierarchy. The theory of reincarnation, amongst other consequences, presented popes, kings, judges, lords — and later the inquisitors — as evil souls, insufficiently purified and little advanced on the path to salvation. It became evident to all that the powerful of the earth — except when, on occasion, they became defenders of the Good Men — belonged to Satan's court: they waged war, killed animals, condemned to death, and judged. This hierarchy of the rich and the rulers, these wicked people, could have no other supreme master than the 'Prince of this world'.

On a completely different level, the same theory undermined one of the foundations of feudalism: the value placed on blood and the idea that virtues and the right to rule over others are passed down from father to son. Admitting that blood might be the vehicle for acquired dispositions or traits, these are evil potentialities, for blood was created by the Devil and, strictly speaking, conveys nothing spiritual. Souls, according to

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[6] As the feudal lord of the Occitan barons, he owed them aid and protection.

absolute dualism, have nothing in common with the bodies that contain them. A baron may have been a servant in a past existence. A servant may become a baron in a future incarnation. A certain man was once a woman, and a woman was once a man. Social differences are merely satanic illusions; they are not based on reality. The first aspiration towards equality took the form of a myth, but was no less fervent for that.

The notion of the *bellator,* the warrior, upon which the feudal system is based, was likewise called into question. As war was condemned by Catharism, the *miles,* whose raison d'être was to wage it, found himself *ipso facto* relegated to the society of the Devil.

War, as such, was despised in all its forms: there were no exceptions. The various idealised notions of heroic death that emerged in the Middle Ages — death for the love of a woman, death for the love of God — were considered worthless: it is clear that the Cathars could only oppose the principle of the Crusades. Whilst, for Catholics, the 'holy war' waged to defend the glory of God or to liberate Christ's tomb exalted courage, gave it a worthy purpose and, moreover, linked the *bellator* ('the warrior') with *the orator* ('the one who prays'), for the Cathars it was merely a dogmatic mystification, for they did not believe that Christ had actually lived on Earth or that he had been buried in a tomb. Above all, they regarded it as a means invented by the clergy to exploit the warriors. In 1250, the troubadour Peire Cardenal[7] — who was not a Cathar, but who had been influenced by the theorists of the heresy and who, moreover, alludes to the crusade against the Albigensians — raised the first courageous criticism against the holy war: 'As long as the clergy so commands,' he says ironically, 'the knights will plunder Tudelle, Le Puy and Montferrand. After having given them bread and cheese, they abandon them to mistreatment. But they protect their own chests well against every blade; and as for their neighbour's brains, if they spill onto the ground, so be it."

As early as the 11th century, in Champagne, the Neo-Manichaean Leutard sought to abolish, along with the tithe, all feudal rights. In Occitania, the Cathars rejected the idea of (human) justice which, being opposed to charity, is evil in essence and which, in a society ruled by Satan, could only be satanic. They did not recognise the right of feudal lords to administer justice. This was how they undermined, not the foundations of society as a whole, as has been claimed, but undoubtedly those of feudal society. On the one hand, they sought to replace this unjust justice with arbitration and conciliation; on the other, to secure the rehabilitation of the guilty party rather than their physical elimination. As they had no opportunity to establish their own judicial system, it is difficult to know exactly what it would have consisted of: we are reduced to interpreting the way in which, in Languedoc before 1209, and at Montségur from 1230 to 1244, they attempted to establish their moral order. We know, for example, that a baron accused of murder was simply sentenced by them to enter the Cathar orders, that is... to become a saint. At Montségur, the bishops submitted all disputes and all cases to their arbitration,

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[7] Peire Cardenal was born in 1180 in Puy-en-Velay and died in 1274 at the age of 94.

arose. This is how they put an end to the constant disputes between the two military commanders of the fortress. Naturally, it would be unwise to judge, based solely on this information, the nature of his repressive methods and, above all, their effectiveness. Everything suggests that his moral authority was not always sufficient to prevent disorder, theft and crime, and that arbitration—which, at that time, managed to resolve conflicts arising between the various guilds or between the communities and the consuls—was not sufficiently binding in criminal matters.

In the Middle Ages, bonds of vassalage and contracts were established and validated by oath. However, the Cathars considered that respect for written law, and commitments made in the name of honour and virtue, constituted sufficient guarantee: they forbade the oath. In this respect, the general evolution of ideas moved in the same direction as heterodox ideology. Not only did the southern barons no longer respect their sworn allegiance—changing lords and protectors as their interests dictated—but even simple peasants regarded written law as far more reliable than a verbal oath.
'Before committing themselves by oath,' declares the poet Peire Cadernal, 'they demand a contract.' I shall not dwell too much on this issue, which is far less significant than has been claimed, for it is clear that the oath
— despite being excessively enshrined by feudalism — was not all that indispensable to it. Feudalism could have survived by simply demanding respect for written contracts, which, in any case, were worth more in Languedoc than sworn commitments. Oaths add nothing (they can easily be replaced by pledges of honour). As is well known, they were abolished by the French Revolution without prejudice to anyone.

Marriage also represents a kind of contract whose value is in no way diminished by the fact that it is a sacrament. And it belongs to the feudal system only insofar as it is intended to be unequal and implies the subordination of the wife to the husband: in the Middle Ages, the husband was the wife's 'lord'. Is it not true that even the humblest of workers also needed to give orders to someone? The Cathars, in wishing, like most of the heretics who had preceded them, that the marital union should be non-sacramental, but concluded by a simple mutual commitment on the basis of equal rights, did not thereby undermine feudal institutions. However, the emergence of this new type of relationship between the sexes undoubtedly introduced a ferment of revolt against the established order, and precisely at a time when Catharism, by admitting women to the priesthood, made them less dependent on men. All non-egalitarian societies proved hostile to women's emancipation; heresy, in general, was favourable to it.

Perhaps under the influence of Catharism, we see that, in the 13th century, the bonds of dependence changed somewhat in character through the introduction, into the mythology of
'honour', of capitalist reality, and that relations between employer and employee acquired, in society, an importance almost as considerable as those that existed between lord and vassal. Feudal 'exchanges', more or less related

Honour—which is ultimately based on the privileges conferred by birth—now plays a less significant role in economic life than the relationships freely established between producers and consumers, sellers and buyers, lenders and their clients. Feudal rights, regarded as illegitimate sources of income, are now opposed by commercial benefits, including those derived from the trade in money. And 'freedom' thus seems to coincide, for the 'rising' class
— that of the merchants — with the freedom to trade. It seems fairer to reward another's free service than to demand it by virtue of a right conferred by birth. Thus, the order of merchants began to oppose that of warriors, just as money opposes honour. It was by justifying interest-bearing loans—a prerequisite for all economic development—and by providing bankers with a clearer conscience that Catharism took a stand against the feudal system.

The 'progressive' effectiveness of heresy can, however, be explained by a return to authentic Christian origins rather than, directly, by a deliberate revolutionary intent. Sociological analysis can, of course, recount the various practical applications made in the 13th century of the ideas of the 'Good Men' and their generous aspirations, but it cannot overlook their irreducible religious character.

The condemnation of war, for example, follows directly from the teachings of Christ. The Greek Church, more faithful to the true doctrine of Christ than the Roman Church, has always held the same view on this point as the Cathars. Precisely at the time when the Perfecti refused to fight and shed blood, Byzantine historians were outraged to see Western bishops taking an active, physical part in the Crusades, wielding the spear or the sword, serving the war machines. If the Cathars opposed feudalism because it was founded on violence—however idealised it might otherwise be, or integrated into the service of the Good—Christianity also opposed it, or ought to have done so. For Men of God, there is only one way to fight: to sacrifice oneself. The Cathars therefore confined themselves to drawing absolute conclusions from the moral teachings of the Gospels; and with good reason, for the petty wars between feudal lords were particularly stupid and reprehensible, and Roman Catholicism itself rose up against this devastating fury and sought to limit its ravages.

The same applies to the discrediting—entirely theoretical, moreover—of manorial courts by the 'good men': it stems quite simply from the famous passage in which St Paul asks the faithful not to take their disputes or lawsuits to pagan courts. 'Who among you, having a dispute with another Christian, would dare to go before unjust men rather than before the saints! If, therefore, there are disputes among you concerning matters of this life, consider the least important members of the Church as judges in such matters. I say this to put you to shame: is it possible to find any sensible man who would want to be a judge between his brothers? Yet a man brings a charge against his brother, and does so before unbelievers!' (1 Cor. 6:1–6). The Cathars could not help but apply the apostle's precepts to society in

in which they lived; for this reason, they avoided resorting to 'satanic' courts. The arbitration they advocated was inspired by St Paul: 'Let the perfect judge!' In this respect, the Cathars' attitude was purely religious in essence; it simply marked a return to primitive doctrinal intransigence. Religions are always revolutionary as long as they remain true to their original purity. This does not mean that, owing to circumstances and given the 'moment', the moral rigour of the Cathars did not acquire the objective significance of a kind of revolt against the society they condemned.

By forbidding oaths, the Cathars were doing nothing more, in this instance too, than conforming to the principles of Christ: 'I tell you, do not swear at all' (Matthew 5:33) and to the practice of his earliest disciples (James 5:12; Justin, I, Apology, 16; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.,* VII, VIII, 10; *Pedagogica* III, 11, 79). In St Augustine's time, the obligation to swear still troubled many Christians (Epist. 48, 125, 126, 157). 'By rejecting it, the Good Men were simply remaining faithful to early Christian tradition.'

In their views on marriage, the Cathars were by no means heretics. It is well known that the sacramental institution of marriage cannot be attributed to Christ with absolute certainty. 'No reference, no convincing trace of this institution is to be found in *the Epistles.* The Council of Trent acknowledged this lack of evidence in the Holy Scriptures in its brief exposition on the doctrine of marriage'.[8] The Cathars, who scrupulously respected the sacred texts, were therefore perfectly entitled to advocate—beyond the mystical marriage of the soul with the spirit, which is a different matter—the conjugal union by mutual consent in the presence of a perfect one; not sacramental, but excluding self-interest and venality and, above all, implying the equality of the spouses in shared love. Thus, if the marriage that the Good Men sought to establish, in accordance with the Scriptures, took on a revolutionary significance by weakening the husband's authority and emancipating women, it was because it corresponded to the legitimate social aspirations of the entire female sex. Very timid aspirations, moreover: we would have to wait another seven hundred years to see women completely free themselves from male *potestas.*

As for the permission granted to believers to practise usury, lending at interest, and commercial lending—that is, to engage in the relatively liberating practices, for that era, of a kind of pre-capitalism—there is no doubt that this was inspired by Christ's own words: 'You wicked and lazy servants, you ought to have placed my money in the hands of the bankers, so that, on my return, I might receive what is mine with interest' (Matthew, XXV, 27) 'Why did you not put my money in the bank, so that, on my return, I might recover it with interest?' (Luke, VI, 34). Provided that whoever sought the loan was wealthier—or as wealthy as the lender, as required by Jewish law in Narbonne at the time—or, at the very least, solvent and

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[8] *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique,* vol. IX, p. 2067. (Paris, 1927).

Provided one could repay the principal and interest, there was nothing inherently reprehensible about this form of lending; and, at a time when capitalism was beginning to emerge, it was as useful to the lender as it was to the borrower. Consequently, the Cathars must have intended to make lawful, as indeed the Greeks did, the trade in money on honest terms; and, to eliminate the sordid usury that ruins and robs the borrower, to create a system of commercial loans that would allow merchants to grow wealthy by developing their businesses. The Perfects, who possessed nothing of their own, wished for as many wealthy believers as possible, who could, through their wealth, free themselves to some extent from the tyranny of feudal society and 'honour'. And they rightly considered that it was no more illogical to lend money to those who knew how to use it than to sell grain.

Ultimately, it was in the economic sphere that Catharism proved most at odds with the spirit of strict feudalism: it reflected the social changes that had already eroded the lords' privileges in Occitania, pitting bourgeois interests against them, and the town against the castle. It was linked to the rise of money. As is obvious, the Good Men never formulated theories on this subject. Perhaps they did not always understand the true nature of the agreement that was thus established between their metaphysics and the development—which was, moreover, always hampered—of mercantilism. They practised evangelical poverty and possessed nothing of their own but a bowl. This ideal freed them from all objective constraints; and, as they used money solely for the good of their neighbour—or of their sect—all capitalist transactions were justified by their selflessness. They considered, moreover, that whilst voluntarily accepted poverty pleased God, the same would not hold true if it were imposed on others; it represented an evil for simple believers who were not inclined to lead an ascetic life and who had to work to live better. For them, fighting against the domination of Satan consisted in mitigating the effect of the unjust obstacles that feudal and Catholic society imposed on the activities of merchants and the bourgeoisie. And, certainly, many members of the bourgeoisie, at the end of the 13th century, embraced Catharism because they wished to become equal to the nobles in power.

This reformed and, moreover, very pure form of Christianity allowed them to claim, without sinning, the right or the opportunity to trade freely, to lend money, or to invest their capital to secure a steady income. This was how they increased their power, which made them, to a certain extent, independent of the caprices of the lords. We have little information about the sect's financial activities, but we know that deposits were made within it and that it sometimes took it upon itself to make them yield a return. The high spiritual standards of the Perfects ensured the accuracy of the accounts: the funds at their disposal made them entirely solvent bankers, similar to those to whom John Chrysostom recommended entrusting money to generate an income; and their charity reassured the client in the event that he was unable to repay the capital and interest.

Since they made no distinction between trading in money and trading in any other commodity, the Cathars, it would seem, held fairer views than the Roman Church, which prohibited loans at interest, wrongly equating them with sordid usury. They were suspicious of earthly property because it was, in principle, reserved for the nobility (the lords were the only true owners of the land) and because it stemmed from 'satanic' injustice, since those who worked the land were not its beneficiaries. Thus, the only work rewarded with any measure of justice was that of the craftsman and the merchant. As for the revenues from feudal and ecclesiastical rights, these were already considered utterly unjust and not based on reason. Tithes had always been unpopular. 'It was not Christ,' said the Good Men, and, at the end of the 13th century, the troubadour Peire Cardenal, 'who established them!'

At a time when, naturally, no one could have had the idea of 'Criticising' capitalist profit, as the Hungarian novelist Géza Hegedüs demonstrated in his fine book **Ketzer und Könige**, the merchants'—excessive—profits did not seem particularly illegitimate given the obstacles and dangers that made the acquisition and circulation of goods so difficult at the time. Moreover, commercial activity did not infringe upon individual interests or freedoms. Anyone who wished to buy could do so. Not only did the bourgeoisie, who compelled merchants to work under their orders, pay them honestly, but in ports such as Narbonne, for example, they shared their profits with them. The magistrates, who, in the name of the Gospel, were very scrupulous in paying for services received, set a good example. Perhaps it was they who contributed most to spreading, through the new myth of the scrupulously honest merchant (this myth persisted right up to the 1914–1918 war!), the notion of free and fair remuneration for labour, so contrary, in principle, to rents and seigneurial rights. In any case, it seemed more honest, we repeat, to persuade someone to work freely, paying them, than to impose burdens and obligations on them in the name of divine law, for, truly, the God who established feudal rights and tithes could not have been the true God.

Let us add that circumstances—war, persecution, exile—forced the Cathars and most of the heretics of the thirteenth century to deal in money to ensure their relative well-being and security, and also to increase the power of their Church. The Perfects were practically forced to prefer movable property to immovable property. Houses and land were too traceable and recoverable, whereas money could be hidden and exported. And, provided it was put to work, it retained its productive value.

By the end of the 13th century, the bourgeois and consular conspiracies hatched in Carcassonne, Limoux, Castres and Albi against the Inquisition clearly showed that, whilst the Spiritualists condemned its fanaticism and cruelty on purely moral grounds, merchants and bankers, for their part, sought to defeat it in order to defend their own interests. At the beginning of the 14th century, they became the staunchest supporters of Catharism. The Church was, for them, the enemy, because it helped to maintain the feudal economic system in which it remained embedded — albeit in a negative way, by opposing the slow rise of their new class

for whom wealth was a symbol of freedom, because it narrowed the gap separating them from the lords and allowed them, in the long term, access to the nobility.

It is interesting to note that, in major trading cities such as Narbonne, where Catharism never gained much a foothold, similar 'spiritual' movements emerged at various times, supported by the consuls, and which, in truth, always served to protect the economic interests of the bourgeoisie and merchants.

Must we conclude that Catharism was merely a kind of epiphenomenon in relation to the social evolution of the time? Clearly not; simply, the 'return to the origins' desired by the 'pure' was, as always, exploited by the 'impure' for their material advantage and within the limits of a fatality resulting from the circumstances and the moment. Without the social adaptation to which the bourgeoisie subjected it, Catharism would have had only weak means of establishment and dissemination. It would have quickly fallen into oblivion and would have been limited to contributing a few saints and initiates to the history of spirituality.

The rehabilitation of usury, in the spirit of St Matthew and St Luke—for it did, albeit in a still tentative manner, herald the future of capitalism—won the 'Good Men' more effective adherents than their metaphysical theories. Philip the Fair would eventually prove the Cathars right by authorising, in 1311, creditors to demand, in addition to the sum owed, interest as compensation for the loan. The interest was four deniers a month, or four sous a year, on a pound. This amounted to 20 per cent per annum, reduced to 15 per cent during the Champagne fairs precisely to enable merchants to make large purchases. Philip the Fair had grasped the distinction that St Matthew, St John Chrysostom, the Jews of Narbonne and the Cathars had rightly drawn between sordid usury and commercial lending.

We can see, then, that Catharism sought to weaken or destroy the established order, but we do not know exactly what it intended to put in its place. The reforms it advocated seem to us, in many respects, utopian or premature. Non-sacramental marriage, for example, was only practised at a time when the heresy was clearly in decline (late 13th century), or perhaps earlier, at Montségur, from 1230 to 1244. It is likely that the Cathar Church had envisaged a kind of civil marriage with the bishop or the Perfect as witness.[9] However, the evolution of the male mindset had not yet reached the point where a truly egalitarian marriage was deemed possible, something that only came to pass in France a few years ago.

It is interesting to note, however, that everything Catharism dreamed of eventually came to pass. It sought to liberate women; they are now completely emancipated. It condemned war, massacres and crimes... and failed to abolish them; but at least the conscience of the best approves of it and seeks desperately to prove it right. It is

[9] The perfect ones were also called 'Good Men'. This concept can be compared to those of the Saddhu and the Sannyasin in Vedic India.

It is surprising to note that its old enemy, the Roman Church, now agrees with what it so strongly condemned in the 13th century, and even with proposals a hundred times more heretical than its own. One would have to be blind not to see that the Catholic Church today is in dire need of a thorough cure of Catharism! The feudal order was defeated in the 18th century, five hundred years too late: in 1789, the wager of the 13th-century Occitan bourgeoisie was fulfilled.

What conclusion should we draw? That Catharism is one of those heterodox movements which, in any case—and above all in an ideal sense—always foreshadow a liberating social evolution. There is a kind of pre-established harmony between spiritual revolutions and other kinds, for it is characteristic of 'pure' ideologies to transcend their own era: they project themselves into the absolute, and nothing disturbs their theoretical convictions. It is precisely because they know they are doomed in the present that they freely embody a certain form of future truth. Whilst the great religions become fossilised, become encrusted in the social and political order of the moment and persist in maintaining it, even when it is outdated, minority and persecuted heresies better safeguard generous ideas, that is, those that correspond to the future in the making. It is inevitable that the economic movement will join them to become self-aware, to measure itself, to move forward. When an unjust or inadequate order is on the verge of disappearing, the present that rejects it always begins by adorning itself with religious idealism. For the Cathars, seigneurial justice, feudal rights, authoritarian marriage—all this was Evil, was Satan. Good was freedom — which at that time meant bourgeois freedom —, respect for the human person, and the advancement of women. Were the Cathars not right? For them, Satan embodied a doomed order, the past: was this order not, in fact, condemned by history?

THE CATARIC EPIC AS SEEN BY CONTEMPORARIES. POETRY, E ND LEGENDS.

As it happened, in Languedoc, rather than remaining underground as in other countries where persecution and misery had claimed only isolated victims, the heresy emerged and swept an entire people into war. Catharism—a truly astonishing phenomenon—had managed to win over almost every class of society to its cause. The peasants hoped it would free them from tithes; the bourgeoisie and merchants, that it would establish a new economic order in which they could grow rich by making money multiply: all this seemed to run counter to the principles of feudalism and would certainly, though in the long term, lead to its weakening. Paradoxically, however, the feudal lords of the Occitan countries were driven, by the force of events — as also happened in Bosnia in the time of Ban Kulin — to defend Catharism in order to safeguard their rights and their property. This resulted in a veritable genocide in which the aristocrats were hit just as hard as the bourgeoisie and the common people. The Occitan language, poetry and the civilisation of Love did not survive this disaster.

The political and military events that unfolded from 1209 until the end of the 13th century have often been recounted: I shall mention them only insofar as they may help to understand the movement of ideas, illustrating them with ‘images’ attributed to contemporary poets and writers. Is not the interest in the history of the Crusades due, in large part, to the fact that it constitutes, in itself, a kind of epic poem whose dramatised structure, varied twists and turns, and dramatic turns of plot still exert a powerful influence, even today, on the imagination and sensibility?

At the beginning of the 13th century, the Count of Toulouse, Raymond VI,[1] who was quite sympathetic to Catharism and had expanded his territories in recent years, showed little inclination to suppress it. The peaceful crusade organised by the Church and the sermons of St Dominic had failed completely, and the papacy criticised the Count and the other Occitan barons for not having supported, as much as might have been desired, the efforts it had made to combat heresy. Although he was very prudent and showed a desire to spare the Church, Raymond VI, already under suspicion for various reasons and excommunicated, found himself in the position of the accused. The papal legate, Peter of Castelnau, was charged with seeking to correct him and, if possible, to make him more obedient. Relations between the two men must have been tumultuous. On 15 January 1208, the legate was murdered as he was preparing to cross the Rhine: the Count of Toulouse was accused of having instigated the crime.

[1] He reigned over the County of Toulouse between 1194 and 1222.

From that point on, the die was cast and, in the mind of the pope, who keenly felt the insult that had just been directed at him, the military crusade was already decided: it would follow the peaceful crusade.

Raimund VI, terrified, thought the time had come to submit. At Saint-Gilles, he publicly confessed his crime and the excommunication was lifted. He promised everything they demanded and even that he would take part, in person, in the crusade that was to be waged against his own vassals. Perhaps he did not mind turning against his nephew, Raymond-Roger Trencavel, Viscount of Béziers and Carcassonne,[2] the war he feared. He had tried in vain, in 1208, to force him to sign a treaty of mutual defence with him. But this young knight, barely twenty-four years old in 1209 and described by his contemporaries as generous and daring, had refused: he wished to free himself from Toulouse's tutelage. In 1201, he had not hesitated to conclude an offensive alliance with the Count of Foix against Raymond VI. Already in *a sirventès*[3] dated 1204 or 1205, the troubadour Cadenet, a supporter of the count, warned him against a spirit of adventure and against any political change: 'Even a brave man must be pitied,' he said, 'when he changes his conduct'. In reality, most of the barons who effectively ruled the viscounty belonged to the anti-Toulouse faction and, bolstered by the support promised by the King of Aragon,[4] their true sovereign and natural protector, were planning to declare war on Toulouse. It was against the Roman Church that they ultimately ended up fighting.

The crusade was quickly announced in northern France and met with great success. It was an excellent business venture that Raymond de Salvagnac, a wealthy merchant from Cahors, agreed to finance. The army assembled in León and marched down into Occitania, following the Rhine valley. On 22 July, it found itself before Béziers, from where Viscount Trencavel had just withdrawn, taking with him all the Jews of the city,[5] who greatly feared the anti-Semitism of the Church and the barons.

The sacking of Béziers [6]

'The inhabitants watch the arrival of the Crusaders; they see that the King of Lust is about to invade the city, that the ruffians are leaping from all sides into the moats, tearing down the walls and throwing open the gates, whilst the French soldiers are hastily arming themselves. They feel they cannot resist and flee as quickly as possible to the main monastery (St Nazarius Cathedral). The priests and clergy don their vestments and ring the bells as if they were about to say Mass for a deceased person. The moment has finally arrived when, since

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[2] He was also Viscount of Albi and Nîmes. He died, poisoned by Simon de Montfort.

[3] Sirventès (or sirvente), an Occitan poetic genre, often with a political tone or, at the very least, a satirical and moralising one.

[4] The King of Aragon was literally murdered at the Battle of Muret in 1213.

[5] Until the 13th century, the Jewish communities established throughout the South-West maintained excellent relations with the Christian population and the lords.

[6] 'Chanson de la croisade', in R. Nelli and R. Lavaud: *Les Troubadours,* Desclée de Brouwer (Paris, 1966, p. 557).

It was impossible to stop the ruffians from entering; they seized houses at will, for each of them could occupy at least ten. Flushed with rage, these reckless men feared not death; they destroyed everything in their path and seized great riches. If they kept what they had taken, they would be rich forever. But soon they will be forced to abandon everything, even though they achieved the conquest on their own, for the barons of France wish to strip them of their spoils.

This massacre of seven or eight thousand good Christians (Catholics and Cathars), which took place in the Church of Our Lady of Béziers and of which Arnaut Amalric, Abbot of Cîteaux and legate of Pope Innocent III, was the detested instigator, did not, whatever anyone may say, 'fit in with the customs of the time'. It was, in fact, a fairly recent form of terrorism. In 1226 it still aroused the indignation of the troubadour Guilhem Figueira, who wrote in his famous *servente* against Rome:
'You wear, Rome, a most ugly cap (a cap of shame); you and Cîteaux have allowed a terrible carnage to be committed in Béziers (a *most strange misfortune!)*'.

On 1 August, the Crusaders laid siege to Carcassonne. King Peter of Aragon tried, in vain, to intervene so that his vassal might obtain acceptable terms of peace. The Crusaders demanded unconditional surrender. 'And he departed sadly,' says the *Song of the Crusade,* 'displeased with himself and full of concern as to the turn the matter was taking'.

'It was the height of summer. The heat was stifling. The foul stench emanating from the sick, mingled with that of the cattle that had been slaughtered and were lying all around, filled the air. Swarms of flies circled the dying (and, it is thought, spread some sort of plague). The cries of women and children could be heard filling the houses. The besieged had never endured such suffering. When water began to run out—the wells were almost dry—despondency and despair took hold even of the knights themselves."

Then the young viscount — the one whom the troubadour Raimundo de Miraval called the *Pastoret* (the little shepherd) — agreed, under circumstances that remain unclear, to negotiate with the Crusaders. He received, it seems, a safe-conduct and, accompanied by a small escort, set off to meet them. Under the curious gaze of the French and the Burgundians, he entered the tent of the Count of Nevers. He never came out again. The account in *the Song of the Crusade* is unequivocal:
'He gave himself up as a hostage of his own free will.' And the poet adds: 'He acted like a madman, in my opinion, when he thus made himself a prisoner.' As soon as Simon de Montfort became the de facto leader of the crusade and received, initially on a provisional basis, the investiture of the viscounty, he hastened to imprison the hostage in a tower of his castle, where he soon died of
'dysentery' (10 November 1209). Everyone in Occitania suspected that Montfort had poisoned him. A *rima* (commentary) on a poem by Arnaut de Mareuil says, speaking of him: 'The Viscount of Béziers whom the French killed when they arrested him in Carcassonne'. And the Dauphiné minstrel Guilhem

Augier, who left us an elegy on his death, the sincerity of which still moves us ('A thousand knights of noble lineage,' he exclaims, 'and a thousand ladies of great worth will, with his death, be plunged into despair'!), seems to have believed, too, that the viscount had sacrificed himself for the salvation of his people, for he does not hesitate to compare him to Jesus Christ: 'They killed him,' he says, 'and never has anyone seen such a crime, such madness, nor done anything more displeasing to God and Our Lord, as did the renegade dogs of the treacherous line of Pilate, who killed him. If God also died to save mankind, he will fill with happiness those who go through the same trials to save their own people."

Comparing Trencavel to Jesus Christ is certainly an exaggeration. Yet this excessive homage is preferable to the indifferent, or even hateful, silence to which the backward admirers of Simon de Montfort consign the viscount. Pierre Belperron, who is, however, regarded as unfavourable to the Meridionals of the , did him justice, in the same spirit as Guilhem Augier[7]had done. 'The crusaders,' he writes, 'shared the common people's horror of the heretics and, as one of them would say, had come to Languedoc to defeat them. If we consider the Crusaders' subsequent behaviour, only the sacrifice of Raymond Roger can explain this anomaly (the fact that they did not massacre the heretics in Carcassonne)."

From 1209 to 1211, Simon de Montfort methodically continued his conquest of the Viscounty of Carcassonne, seizing Montréal, Castres, Pamiers, Albi, Minerva, Termes, Cabaret and Lavaur, always displaying the same cruelty and using terror as a weapon of war. In Lavaur (3 May 1211), he ordered Aimeric de Montréal to be hanged and his sister Guiraude to be thrown into a well. 'I do not believe,' says the poet of *the Song of the Crusade,* 'that in all Christendom a baron of such importance has ever been hanged, and with him so many knights, for there were more than eighty of them alone. As for the townspeople, four hundred were gathered in a meadow to be burned. Moreover, Guiraude was thrown into a well and covered with stones by the crusaders. It was a disgrace and a crime, for let it be known that no one in the world would approach this lady without being provided with food to their heart's content... It was by the Holy Cross of May that Lavaur was ruined in the manner I have told you."

During these two years, Simon de Montfort suffered few defeats, except at the end of 1209, when his troops and those of Duke Eudes of Burgundy were defeated before the towers of Cabaret. But in 1211, Pierre Rogier, the lord of the castle, seeing that he was the only one still holding out, surrendered it to Simon de Montfort in exchange for equivalent fiefs on the plain.

It was then that the Count of Toulouse, ever prudent and ever an enemy of war, decided to appeal to the Pope and surrender. He handed over the palace — the 'Castle of Narbonne' — to the Crusaders, and his city was effectively occupied. The abbot

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[7] P. Belperron: *The Crusade against the Albigensians* (Paris, Plon, 1942, p. 147).

of Cîteaux and the Bishop of Toulouse, Folquet de Marseille[8] , the former troubadour, delivered numerous sermons without much success. Of this Folquet, according to the *Song of the Crusade, the* Count of Foix is said to have remarked at the Lateran Council: 'When he was elected Bishop of Toulouse, fire spread so widely across the land that no water could ever extinguish it, for it caused five hundred thousand adults and children to lose both body and soul. By the faith I owe you, he seems more like the Antichrist than a messenger of Rome, with his deeds, words, and attitudes... With his deceptive songs, full of suggestive words, which are the ruin of whoever speaks or sings them, with his profound and delicate sayings, with our gifts, thanks to which he became a minstrel (the most piquant detail in the story is that the bishop, in the days when he was a troubadour, did indeed sing before the court of Foix and received from the count, as payment for his services, many gifts!), and, finally, with his false doctrine, he has become so proud that no one dares to contradict him...'

Dante, more forgiving than the Count of Foix, included the bishop—who was, moreover, an excellent poet—in his **Paradiso**, in the 'Heaven of Venus', where, in a long speech, he briefly alludes to the fiery torment that consumed him, 'whilst his age permitted it'...

The knights of Toulouse, as well as the bourgeoisie and the common people, driven to despair by clerical intrigues and the humiliations inflicted by the French, eventually rose up in revolt. The peace-loving count was dragged into the war against his will. He fought the campaign without much enthusiasm. I shall not recount in detail these rather confused and inglorious military operations for the Occitan side. Raymond VI managed to capture Simon de Montfort at Castelnaudary. There were some inconclusive skirmishes. Both sides displayed feats of valour, to no avail; and finally, Raymond, defeated, lifted the siege.

Among the ranks of the southern army was a great lord, a troubadour in his spare time, Savari de Mauléon, whom Pierre des Vaux de Cernay describes as 'wicked apostate and son of the devil in wickedness, minister of the Antichrist surpassing all other heretics and worse than all infidels, enemy of Jesus Christ', etc. In reality, this Savari of Mauléon had mentioned, on two or three occasions, fighting against Simon de Montfort, but there is no evidence that he ever embraced heresy. A shrewd politician and a charming poet, he was truly interested only in diplomacy, war and women.

He was seneschal of Aquitaine for the King of England. It is likely that a decisive victory for the Tolosans would have led the English king to intervene in the conflict in a more direct manner. Perhaps the fate of Occitania was determined by those days at Castelnaudary, where the Count of Foix showed such valour and where Raymond VI cut such a sorry figure... Yet he did not forfeit his rights through chivalry. It is said that Savari de Mauléon had entered the fray solely out of a chivalrous spirit and to please Countess Eléonore de

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[8] Foulques, or Folquet de Marseille, was appointed Bishop of Toulouse in 1205; he died on 25 December 1231.

Toulouse. ‘Five hundred of us,’ he wrote to her, ‘are waiting only for your orders. One signal from you and we shall mount our horses!’

In the months that followed, Simon de Montfort, less hesitantly and more decisively, having already taken Montferrand and Les Cassés, also seized the towns of Hautpoul, Saint-Antonin-de-Rouerque, Penned’Agenais, Mossaic and almost the entire Comminges region, without Raymond VI putting up much of a fight to defend them. Raymond VI’s situation seemed desperate. By 1212, he was left with only Toulouse and Montauban.

Peter of Aragon

One might say that, in this war, the Devil took pleasure in multiplying the dramatic twists. The situation was abruptly reversed. King Peter of Aragon, victor over the Moors at Las Navas de Tolosa, had always considered himself the true lord of the Viscounty of Carcassonne and was unwilling to see his authority wane in this part of Languedoc. The presence of the French near his borders and in the towns and domains over which he held rights caused him some unease, all the more so as Simon de Montfort seemed in no way inclined to pay him homage regarding the viscounties of Trencavel, as he ought to have done in accordance with strict feudal law. Finally, the family ties that bound him to Raymond VI—one of his sisters was married to Raymond VI and the other, Saneie, to the young Raymond VII—and perhaps also a secret treaty of mutual assistance signed on the occasion of these marriages obliged him to come to his brother-in-law’s aid.

The Occitan troubadours, in their scathing *sirventes,* did not fail to remind him that, for the time being, his glory and prestige were more important than his political interests. They did not hesitate to reproach him for his inaction, or even his cowardice. An anonymous poet — perhaps Raymond de Miraval
— he pretends to address the minstrel Hugonet: ‘Come now, Hugonet, sing another *sirventes* to the King of Aragon; tell him he is keeping us waiting, that we already consider him defeated. They say the French have long been occupying at will the land he is unable to defend, and since he has won so many victories over the Moors, let him also remember his vassals who are here. Tell him that his valour, already so great, will be tripled when we see him, at Carcassés, collecting as a good king the rents due to him (...). And if they seek to prevent him, let him not hesitate to show his resentment, let him triumph through force and blood, and let the war machines fire so fiercely that no wall can withstand them! (...) We wish to fight the French to see who will win the prize of chivalry! As right is on our side, I think it will be they who lose...’

Peter of Aragon allowed himself to be persuaded, certainly more by the arguments of the jurists than by those of the troubadours. He immediately initiated a very skilful and resolute diplomatic campaign with Pope Innocent III. His ambassadors manoeuvred so skilfully and put forward such convincing arguments that the Pope felt troubled. He sent Amaury a stern letter ordering him to come to an understanding with the King of Aragon in order to finally pacify Languedoc and ‘leave

‘to proclaim the crusade against heresy by making use of the indulgences which the Apostolic See had promised for this purpose’. At the same time, he sent Simon de Montfort a letter no less harsh and reproachful, which took everyone by surprise, and the French in particular: ‘The arms of the crusaders,’ he said, ‘have turned against the Catholic peoples; you have shed the blood of the innocent and, in defiance of the illustrious King of Aragon, invaded the lands of the Counts of Foix and Comminges, and those of Gaston of Béarn, whilst the King, their lord, was fighting the Saracens (...). It is possible, he added, that, by unjustly retaining the invaded territories, you might claim to have acted for your own good and not for the cause of the faith.”

If we did not know that a certain form of versatility characterised the spirit of the Middle Ages and that another, more subtle form was always regarded as a virtue among great statesmen, we would be in a position to assert, as Raymond VI did, that this world, created by the Devil, obeys only chance. The Crusaders were beginning to think that all was lost, that Simon de Montfort would not give up. However, the bishops and the French acted swiftly. On the Pope’s orders, a council was convened at Lavaur, ‘without worrying,’ Belperron remarked jocularly, ‘about the fate of Madame Guiraude, the eighty knights hanged, and the prefects burned in May 1211’. In principle, the Count of Toulouse was to be invited to apologise. But it soon became clear that the Devil had changed his mind. The Pope, at least, no longer harboured the same feelings towards the king. It was evident that the bishops had forced him to change his mind. The Church had sworn to bring about the downfall of the Raymondine dynasty, and the council took no account of the arguments put forward by King Peter’s ambassadors to declare innocent, if not Raymond VI, then at least his son, the future Raymond VII: ‘The Count of Toulouse,’ said the bishops, ‘has rendered himself unworthy of any pardon. His son Raymond VII must suffer the same fate. Like father, like son. The Counts of Foix, Béziers and Comminges, as well as Gaston of Béarn, are declared heretics: they protected the Good Men and fought at the head of their armies against the soldiers of Christ; they have severed themselves from the Christian community...’ In short, the Council of Lavaur, driven by the worst intentions towards Peter of Aragon, refused to pardon Raymond VI and did not even offer him the possibility of redemption in the future. The monarch was angered and hurt at not having found among the members of the council the consideration, or even the deference, which, as a ‘very Christian king’, he had expected from them. Circumstances and the irony of fate now forced him to appear as a ‘Patarine’[9], since the vassals he had so courageously defended were accused of being just that.

For several weeks now, the knight of Scala, the king’s aide-de-camp, had been staying in Toulouse with a contingent of troops. Throughout the city, one saw only Catalan barons conversing with the burghers or courting the ladies. The king himself spent a few days at the count’s castle. Toulouse was becoming Aragonese and

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[9] *Patarino*: a term for the Cathars, more commonly used in France, either a corruption of ‘Cathar’ or because their only prayer was the *Pater* (P. Belperron, *op. cit.,* p. 63, note 1).

Raymond VI perhaps thought that it had merely changed hands... But anything was preferable to the French!

Simon de Montfort and the clergy sent two abbots to Peter of Aragon to convey the Pope's orders. He replied with kind words, determined, this time, to act as he saw fit and without delay. After a brief stay in Provence, he returned to Barcelona and mustered his army.

He entered Occitania via Gascony and soon arrived in Toulouse, to the cheers of the whole population. He was the liberator. No one doubted victory.

The Battle of Muret

On 12 September, the Battle of Muret took place. The king, who had ridden a great deal, was thoroughly exhausted. It is said—though this is certainly a slander invented by the Catholics—that he had spent the night with his mistress and could barely stay on his horse. In reality, he believed in the virtues of enthusiasm and that bravery was enough for everything.

The battle took place on the lush, damp plain of Muret, against the advice of the prudent Raymond VI who, true to Roman tactics, would have preferred to construct a battlefield and defeat the enemy with a volley of arrows: his timidity was criticised and he sulked... It was a battle between knights in which the Aragonese proved themselves brave and reckless in indescribable chaos.
'All the barons wanted to fight without order or tactics (P. Belperron) amidst the tumult and clamour.' 'The clang of arms was such that it seemed as though a forest were being cleared by the blows of an axe' (Guillaume de Puylaurens). The French, being more disciplined, made better use of the squires and sergeants who accompanied the knights at that time. Their tight ranks quickly overcame the bravery of the Count of Foix's men and the impetuosity of the Aragonese cavalry. Simon de Montfort's military genius did the rest. King Peter of Aragon fell victim to a sort of assassination. Two heroic criminals, the French knights Alain de Roucy and Florent de Ville, had sworn to kill the king—the traitor!—or die. Fortune is often favourable to such men, ready to pay for their enemies' deaths with their own. They cut their way through with sword blows and sought out the king amongst his guard. The king, in accordance with a custom then observed by sovereigns, had, the day before, exchanged his armour for that of one of his knights, so that the French first fell upon his substitute, killing him easily. 'That is not the king,' Alain de Roucy is said to have remarked, 'the king is a better horseman!' Peter, hearing this, is said to have exclaimed: 'The king is here!' He struck down a French knight and then succumbed to the attack of the two assailants. The Aragonese barons—among whom was Michel de Lusian—had done the impossible to protect the sovereign, shielding him with their bodies: they died instantly. Uc de Mataplana, protector of the troubadours and a troubadour himself, returned to Toulouse, seriously wounded.

‘Great were the disaster, the mourning and the loss, when the King of Aragon was found dead, covered in blood, just like many other barons; and great was the disgrace for all Christendom and for all mankind. The inhabitants of Toulouse, filled with sorrow and grief, those who had managed to escape and had not remained at the scene of the battle, returned to Toulouse, sheltered within the walls” (*The Song of the Crusade*).

Raymond of Toulouse and his son abandoned the capital almost immediately. In the days that followed, Simon de Montfort continued his conquests, occupying Agenais, southern Périgord and Rouergue (1214). From April to October 1215,

Louis of France[10] came to his aid at the crucial moment, undertaking a short, forty-day personal crusade. On his return to Paris, he certainly told his father how Simon de Montfort had managed to advance and enrich himself. Yet Simon de Montfort did not for that reason cease to conquer the city of Foix and almost the entire county of Toulouse (1215). It was then that Pope Innocent III convened a general council of arbitration in Rome: the Lateran Council (November 1215), where the Count of Foix defended, in vain, his cause and that of the Count of Toulouse:

‘Holy Father, my full right vindicates me, as do my loyal integrity and my good intentions; and if I am judged according to my righteousness, I am saved and secure, for I have never favoured heretics or believers. On the contrary, I surrendered and offered myself to the Abbey of Boulbonne, where I was well received, and where my entire family was buried. As for Puy de Montségur, the law is clear. I was never, not for a single day, its sovereign lord. And if my sister was wicked and sinful, she must not pay for her sins (...). As for the bishop (Folquet of Toulouse), who shows himself so angry on this matter, I tell you that God, and we, have been betrayed by him.

The Pope replied very kindly to the Count of Foix:

‘Count, you have set out your claim very well, but you have, in a way, diminished ours. I shall examine your claim and the sincerity of your feelings. And if your cause is just, once I have proof, you shall have your castle back just as you left it. And if the Holy Church condemns you, she will forgive you if God inspires you to repent. Every wicked sinner, lost and enslaved by sin, must be truly received by the Church when she finds him in danger of spiritual death, if he repents and does as she commands.”

Another smile from the Devil: another dramatic twist! Raymond VI is in Genoa, where his son, ‘the young count’ (Raymond VII), is to join him. They enter their domains in Provence (March 1216), and Marseille and Avignon welcome them enthusiastically. Here they are on the road to Avignon:

‘The barons ride, two by two, across the verdant plains, thinking of arms and armour, and Guy de Cavaillon, from the height of his grey horse,

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[10] This is the future Louis VIII, married to Blanche of Castile and father of St Louis.

she says to the young count: The time has come when Parage needs you to be both good and evil, for the Count of Montfort, who destroys the barons, the Church of Rome and the preaching, has shamed and dishonoured Parage. It has undergone so many changes that, unless you support it, it will disappear. If Prix and Parage are not restored by you, Parage will die, and with it, trust in you. And since you are Parage's true hope, and one of you will fall, show yourself to be brave! — Gui, says the young count, I am pleased with what I have just heard and shall reply shortly. If Jesus saves me and my companions, and restores Toulouse to me, which I so desire, Parage will never again feel dishonoured or poor. There is no one powerful enough to destroy me, save the Church. And if my right and my cause are great, if I have wicked and proud enemies, to those who show themselves to be leopards I shall respond as a lion.

'They talk of weapons, love and gifts until night falls and Avignon welcomes them. When word of their arrival spreads through the city, there is not a single person, young or old, who does not come running joyfully from every street and house. Happy is he who runs the fastest! Some shout: "Toulouse!" in honour of father and son, and others: "Happiness!" God is with us. With open hearts and tearful eyes they come to kneel before the count and, together, say: 'Christ, glorious Lord, grant us the power and strength to restore their inheritance to them!' — The crowd is so dense and the procession so great that it becomes necessary to resort to threats, whips and clubs.

'On Sunday morning, the formula is recited to receive the oath and pledges before the count. Then, one party says to the other: 'Legitimate and beloved lord, do not fear to give or spend! We shall restore the money to you and remain devoted to you until you recover your land, or we shall die with you.' — 'Gentlemen,' says the count, 'the reward shall be great, for you shall have more power over God and over yourselves!'

'Nothing is as moving, in *the Song of the Crusade,*' wrote Simone Weil[11],'as the moment when the free city of Avignon voluntarily submits to the Count of Toulouse, defeated, stripped of its lands, deprived of all resources, practically reduced to begging... Can we imagine a more generous way for free men to seek a master? This generosity shows us to what extent the chivalric spirit had permeated the entire population of the cities."

1216. Simon de Montfort now finds himself forced to fight on two fronts. Events are about to come to a head. Whilst Raymond VI sets off for Spain to raise an army, the young count lays siege to Beaucaire with the help of the people of Marseille.

'The people of Marseille arrive in high spirits. On the waters of the Rhine, the oarsmen sing. At the fore are the helmsmen in charge of the sails, the archers and the sailors. Horns, trumpets, cymbals and drums resound along the banks at dawn. The shields and spears, and the passing waves, the blue and the

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[11] Simone Weil: 'The Agony of a Civilisation', in *Cahiers du Sud,* 1942.

red, the green and the white, the fine gold and the silver mingle with the glare of the sun and the water, for the mist has just lifted. On land, Sir Ancelmet and his knights ride merrily under a bright sun, their horses adorned with caparison, banners flying ahead. Shouts are heard everywhere: 'Toulouse!' in honour of the noble son of the count who traverses his domains. And they enter Beaucaire.

The capture of Beaucaire dealt a severe blow to the prestige of Simon de Montfort, hitherto considered invincible.

July–August 1216: Toulouse revolts. Simon de Montfort ravages part of the city, but cannot become its lord.

1217: he sets off for Provence to fight the young count, but at the same time, Raymond VI makes his entry into the liberated Toulouse.

"The inhabitants, the notables and the people, the barons, the ladies, the women and their husbands kneel before him and kiss his robe, his feet, his legs, his toes... and one says to another: 'Now we have Jesus Christ, the shining star, the star that has come to shine upon us. He is our Lord, hitherto lost. And Prix and Parage, which were buried, have come back to life, been restored, healed and saved!'" *(The Song of the Crusade*).

1218. Simon de Montfort, defeated in Provence, quickly returned to Languedoc. He advanced on Toulouse, which he besieged, but could not prevent the young count from entering the city in turn: everywhere, bad omens for the French:

'From the highest point of the bridge tower, which the Crusaders had first managed to capture, the banner falls into the water and the Lion of Montfort is lost in the sand… The bells and chimes rung by the bell-ringers echo through the city, across the water, and over the sand. And, in this joy, five thousand sergeants and squires emerge from within and take up positions in the besieging army's ranks, ready to run and swift of foot. They shout at the top of their voices: 'Robin, Gautier' (French names used to ridicule them). 'Death! Death to the French and the soldiers! We have surrounded the battlefield for God has restored to us our leader and heir, the brave young count who has enlightened us!'

Things continued to worsen for the conqueror, who watched his most loyal companions die.

"Sire, Count of Montfort, your fate looks very bleak. You will suffer great defeats for being so devout! The men of Toulouse have killed your knights, your companies and your finest mercenaries: Guillaume Thomas, Garnier and Simon du Caire are dead; Gautier is wounded..."

Gui, brother of Simon de Montfort, is also killed. "The count approaches his beloved brother, kneels and utters these impious words: 'My brother, God hates us, me and my companions, and protects the mercenary soldiers; thus, because of this wound, I shall become a Hospitaller monk!'"

25 June 1218: the death of Simon de Montfort

Whilst Guy, mortally wounded, groans and lies dying, the Toulouse war machines continue to fire.

"There was in the city a stone-throwing machine built by a carpenter. Stones were quarried from Saint-Sernin, as well as beech wood. And it was ladies, girls and women who operated it. And the stone that was hurled struck its target squarely and hit Simon on his steel helmet, so that his eyes, brains, teeth and jaws were blown to pieces..."

'They take him straight to Carcassonne to be buried (…). And the epitaph, for those who can read it, states that he was a saint and a martyr, that he shall rise again, share in the heavenly inheritance and blossom in his marvellous happiness, wear a crown and live in the kingdom of God.'

'And I have heard it said that it must be so: if, to kill men and shed blood, to lose souls, to condone crimes, to heed wicked counsel, to set fires, to destroy barons, to dishonour Parage, to conquer lands by force, to give free rein to pride, to stir up Evil and destroy Good, to kill women, to hang children—if this is possible, in this world, to conquer Jesus Christ, one must wear a halo and shine in heaven. And may the Son of the Virgin, who leads the righteous to the Father, who gave his precious flesh and blood to destroy pride, watch over Reason and Justice, which are in danger of disappearing, and may he, between the two parties, make the Law shine!" (*The Song of the Crusade*)

The Marmande Massacre

June 1219. The time had come for the French monarchy to replace Amaury de Montfort, who had succeeded his father without possessing his talent and who, it is said, was under the moralising influence of a devout Cathar with whom he sometimes met. Prince Louis, son of Philip Augustus, was eager to put an end to the successes of Raymond VII, who had just defeated the French at Báziège, and more besides. With his army comprising twenty bishops, 600 knights and 10,000 archers, he therefore joined forces with Amaury at Marmande. The besieged city surrendered and all its inhabitants, including women and children, were massacred, totalling 5,000.

'Even if we take into account the poet's (of *the Song*) customary exaggeration and the chroniclers' tendency to inflate the figures, it is true, as Pedro Belperron writes, that the population of Marmande was massacred, if not entirely, then at least in large part, without there being, as in the case of Béziers, any excuse for this massacre in the form of adventurers or a city taken by storm. Who should bear the responsibility? Probably Amaury's men, eager to avenge the death of Simon de Montfort and to punish the city's defection, making an example of it. The other crusaders, though they did not take part in the massacre, did not even dream of opposing it." Nor, for that matter, I might add, the twenty bishops.

Prince Louis and Amaury de Montfort arrived before Toulouse on 16 June 1219. It was the third siege that this unfortunate city was to endure. During the crusade, say the chroniclers, God performed many miracles in favour of Simon de Montfort. Let us be fair and acknowledge that, on this occasion, He also performed one for Raymond VII: the Frenchman failed to take the city. It was a 'devastating defeat', as Pope Honorius
III. On 1 August, 'arguing that the quarantine had ended, he lifted the siege so hastily that he abandoned the siege engines, which the besieged used to celebrate their liberation'.

Fate seemed decidedly more favourable than ever to the Counts of Toulouse. They had regained all their domains. And Languedoc found itself—with its ruins and devastation—more or less in the same situation as in 1208. The massacre of so many innocent people seemed to have been utterly in vain. The Perfects resumed their preaching: one could even witness a resurgence of Catharism. Amaury de Montfort, abandoned by almost all the knights, destitute and crippled by debt, was forced to resign himself to evacuating Carcassonne, where the young Trencavel, son of the viscount murdered in 1209, entered and took up residence shortly afterwards.

The royal conquest

The feudal crusade had come to an end. The main characters of the early acts of the tragedy had died or vanished from the political scene: Philip Augustus, Raymond VI, the Count of Foix. We were approaching the dénouement. The royal conquest was about to begin.

Before leaving the South, Amaury de Montfort had ceded all his rights to Louis VIII, who would not miss the opportunity to assert them. And the campaign would not, like that of 1215, be a mere journey or pilgrimage: it would last from 1224 to 1226.

The king encountered no serious resistance, except in Avignon, which he captured (in September 1226) following a proper siege. To establish French rule definitively in Provence and Languedoc, he founded two seneschalships, one in Beaucaire and the other in Carcassonne. It is likely that he attempted, the following year, to capture Toulouse, which he would have succeeded in doing. But God, or the Devil, still protected the count, intermittently, and not for long. The king fell ill and died at Montpensier, in Auvergne.

Although his situation was by no means[1] desperate, Raymond VII realised that he could not continue to resist the immense power of the French monarchy: everyone was rallying to the king's side, marching towards victory. Towns and castles were turning their backs on the Count of Toulouse. As his domains were once again reduced to Toulouse and a few parcels of land near the city, he considered surrendering. He convened an assembly in Meaux (1228–1229) where the preliminary terms of the peace treaty were drawn up; the count signed this treaty with Louis IX in Paris on 12 August 1229, in front of Notre-Dame.

Raymond retained Toulouse and part of Languedoc, but it was stipulated that his estates would pass to his daughter, Joan, who was to marry Afonso of Poitiers, the king's brother[12] . French rule was beginning to take hold in Toulouse. Occitan culture was beginning — slowly — to disappear from the whole of Languedoc 'where the native nobility had, for the most part, been replaced by immigrants who ignored or despised the language of the region' (A. Janroy). A university, the second in the kingdom, was to be established in Toulouse. The Inquisition, naturally, was already in operation.

'During the day,' wrote the troubadour Sicard de Marvejols on this occasion, or shortly afterwards, 'during the day I feel irritable, and at night, whether I sleep or not, I cannot stop sighing. Wherever I turn, I see people who are far too courteous, humbly addressing the French as 'Sire'. Yes, the French take pity on us when they see us with our hands full, for that is the law they know. Oh! Toulouse, Provence; lands of Argence (Beaucaire), of Béziers and of Carcassonne, who saw you then and who sees you now!"

The years from 1229 to 1249 (the date of the count's death) were marked by the efforts of Raymond VII to circumvent, evade or nullify the disastrous consequences of the Treaty of Meaux-Paris, and by the southern populations to continue practising the Cathar faith in defiance of the Inquisition. But the count suffered nothing but defeats.

He sought, first and foremost, to reconquer Provence or, at the very least, to retain his rights over it: it slipped from his grasp for good and eventually fell to Charles of Anjou, brother of Louis IX. In 1240, the revolt of Trencavel, son of Raymond Roger, broke out prematurely—and perhaps against Raymond VII's wishes. Having set out from Spain with a few knights 'faidits'[13] and a band of mercenary soldiers, initially achieved minor successes in his former viscounty, but was defeated at Carcassonne, which he failed to retake. Shortly afterwards, he surrendered to the king.

Montségur

Montségur continued to hold out. When he was forced to comply with the provisions of the Treaty of Meaux concerning the suppression of heresy, Raymond VII pretended to seek its conversion, but avoided appearing triumphant, as he would have had to hand over this fortress to the king, which would then have allowed him to maintain contact with the Count of Foix. All believers had their eyes fixed on Montségur, a symbol of religious and political resistance. Within its walls, the Cathar clergy continued to keep the faith and rites intact and continued to look after the spiritual and material interests of the sect.

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[12] The couple died in 1271, childless, which played into the hands of the French monarchy's conquest plans.

[13] The term *faidit*, synonymous with *outlaw*, was applied to heretical lords or sympathisers of the heresy who abandoned their castles upon the arrival of the French (P. Belperron, *op. cit.*, p. 189, note 1).

It was from Montségur that, on 23 May 1242, the punitive expedition set out which massacred, in Avignonet where they were passing through, the Inquisitors of Toulouse, the Dominican Guillaume Arnaud and the Franciscan Etienne de Saint-Thibéry, as well as their deputies and advisers. This bloody operation was intended to precede the general uprising throughout the Languedoc: it was perhaps a sign. Indeed, Raymond VII and the southern barons, allies of King Henry III of England and the Count of La Marche, and confident of the support—which was, moreover, more moral than effective—of the kings of Navarre, Aragon, and even Emperor Frederick II, almost immediately entered into open conflict with France. But the English were defeated at Taillebourg and the principal allies lost heart even before the fighting had begun. Raymond VII, the Count of Foix and the Viscount of Narbonne sought peace without further delay.

Thus, all the military attempts made by the count to evade the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Meaux proved unsuccessful and were complete failures. The same was true of his marriage policy. Raymond VII, who had no children, believed, certainly with good reason, that a legitimate heir of his own blood would have a better chance of supplanting — despite the treaty — any children that might be born to Joan and Afonso of Poitiers. That is why he repudiated his wife, Sanaya of Aragon, with the aim of marrying another Sanaya, the daughter of Count Raymond Béranger of Provence. However, negotiations with the papacy dragged on, and Saneie, being singularly impatient, chose instead to marry the brother of the King of England, Richard, immediately. Undeterred, Raymond VII then sought the hand of the daughter of the Count of La Marche, a notorious anti-French figure and his former ally. He thus married Marguerite de La Marche. But he had a change of heart, repudiated this poor woman (all too easily, since, due to a lack of authorisation, the marriage had not been consummated) and turned his attention to the youngest daughter of the Count of Provence, Beatrice. In this matter, he enjoyed the support of James of Aragon. But the French court was watching closely. Raymond VII was removed without his fiancée being consulted, and she was given to Charles of Anjou, who commanded an army present there.

It was thus inevitable that Raymond VII would die without a son and that his domains would pass to the French crown. He died in 1249. In 1258 and 1259, Aragon, and later England, renounced their claims to the South. With the death of Countess Joan and Count Alfonso of Poitiers[14] , the King of France became Count of Toulouse. He governed the country directly with four seneschals.

The burning of Montségur

Catharism was not immediately eradicated. Until 1244, the date of the fall of Montségur, it remained active and vigilant. Many believers, thanks to the dedication of the last clandestine Perfects, were able to receive, on their deathbeds, the *consolamentum* that saved their souls. In the towns, especially in

[14] They died three days apart, on 21 and 24 August 1271.

In Toulouse, opposition to the Inquisition sometimes descended into riots in the working-class neighbourhoods: terrorism was met with terrorism. In the bourgeois 'centre', in the homes of the city's leading figures, nightly gatherings were held where plots were hatched against the French and against the Church. There were organised resistance networks which strove, both in the city and in the countryside, to preserve the essence of the Cathar faith, to protect the victims of the Inquisition by facilitating their departure for Lombardy, and to take revenge on traitors and informers.

Montségur seems to have played an important role in this daily struggle against the Inquisition. People entered the castle to escape its henchmen and also to die with God.

Following the murder of the Inquisitors of Avignonet, the destruction of that den of heretics—vigorously defended by Pierre Roger de Mirepoix and his knights—was demanded by the Church and the king. But for this task, we could not count on Raymond VII. In March 1243, Hugues d'Arcis, seneschal of Carcassonne, received orders to destroy the 'Head of the Dragon'. An army set out for Montségur, accompanied by two formidable clergymen: Peter Amiel, Archbishop of Narbonne, and Durand, Bishop of Albi, who was an expert in war machines. Their troops surrounded the mountain of Montségur.

For several months, however, they were unable to completely block the fortress, which continued to receive provisions, weapons, news from France and Italy, and messages from the count. From his neighbouring castle, Bernard d'Alion even sent some Catalan soldiers to aid the besieged. This Bernardo d'Alion, initially very hostile towards heretics, had married, in 1235, the daughter of the Count of Foix, Esclarmonde, who may have been a believer and who eventually made her husband more sympathetic towards the victims of the Inquisition. It was certainly of her that the troubadour Montanhagol, a fierce enemy of the French and the preachers, wrote:
"Lady Esclarmonde, your name is so precious and so beautiful that merely thinking of it is enough to make us feel protected from Evil throughout the day (...). May God protect and preserve Esclarmonde[15] whose name tells us, if we know how to read it, that she is transparent and pure"!

Meanwhile, the siege continued. Grand illusions kept hope alive and bolstered the courage of the knights shut up in the fortress. One day a rumour spread—Raimund VII would help to spread it—that Emperor Frederick II[16], the Antichrist himself (in the eyes of the Romans!), would come to free the besieged. It was unlikely that the great emperor would undertake a raid on Montségur. But, strictly speaking, it would have been enough for him to exert any pressure on Provence for the whole of Languedoc to rise up further

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[15] Do not confuse this Esclarmonde d'Alion with her aunt, the great Esclarmonde, sister of Raymond Roger, Count of Foix, who received the *consolamentum* at Fanjeaux in 1204 from the hands of the famous Guilhambert de Castres.

[16] This refers to the great Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen, who was both a man of remarkable culture and intelligence, and one of the most distinguished esotericists of his time. His disagreements with the papacy are legendary.

once. Raymond VII had been an ally of Frederick in 1240 and had subsequently abandoned him in 1241. But in the current situation, that is, in 1243, Frederick had once again drawn closer to the Count of Toulouse and had ceded the marquisates of Provence and Venaissin, which had raised great hopes among the people of the south, and an armed intervention by the emperor was anticipated in anti-French circles. As evidenced by the troubadour Uc de Saint-Circ — a Francophile in this instance — who, in one of his *sirventes,* feels compelled to warn the Church and the King of France against their aggressions. He even advises them to take the lead and launch a veritable crusade against Frederick to strip him of his states. 'For,' he adds, 'he who does not believe in God must not reign.' All these statements, in truth, were intended to incite the Cathars to show themselves as devoted to the emperor and as 'Ghibelline' as the Patarines of Florence. Did Uc de Saint-Circ not claim that Frederick had promised the English 'that he would restore to them Brittany, Anjou, Guyenne, etc., and that he would avenge Toulouse, Béziers and the region of Carcassonne'?

It is not impossible that Uc de Saint-Circ's *sirventès* reached Montségur — the troubadours' songs spread quickly — or that the Perfects knew what it contained before Raymond VII had warned them through his emissaries.

But Frederick II did not come to liberate Montségur or avenge Carcassonne and Béziers. And, whilst the besiegers managed to seize a small fort that protected the stronghold from the east and allowed its defenders to receive news from the outside world and their share of dreams and illusions, Montségur capitulated. Pierre Roger de Mirepoix had, however, managed, shortly before the surrender, to save the treasure of the Cathar Church...

On 1 and 2 March 1244, two hundred heretics were burned.
'Among them was Bertrand Marti[17], who had been appointed bishop; and, because they refused to convert as they were asked, they were shut up in an enclosure made of stakes and sticks and, having been burned, passed from the fire of their torment to the fires of Tartarus.'

(Guillaume de Puylaurens.)

Among these martyrs were the elderly Marquise of Lantar, her daughter Corba de Péreille and her granddaughter Esclarmonde de Péreille.

In that same year of 1244, the Cathars of Florence were likewise cast into the 'flames of Tartarus'.

After the fall of Montségur and Quéribus in the Corbières, the last Cathar stronghold (1255), Catharism took two divergent paths. In the cities, it became a kind of political party, a 'Ghibelline' party,

[17] Bertrand Marti was originally from Tarabel (Haute-Garonne); he had settled in Montségur in 1238.

One might say that it brought together notables, bourgeois, bankers, often consuls, and frequently Roman clergy as well. Good Catholics in principle, these influential and respected figures had but one aim: to free themselves by any means from the Dominican Inquisition, ready to demand — or pretend to demand — the restoration of the episcopal Inquisition, which was far less unjust and tyrannical. Meanwhile, they continued to draw the king's attention to the danger facing the country's economy due to the flight of capital and labour to Lombardy. And it was by a narrow margin that Philip the Fair, in 1305, did not grant their requests. But new riots came to ruin everything.

In Carcassonne, in 1285, the burghers and consuls had attempted to seize the Inquisition's registers, in which were recorded the names of citizens suspected of heresy. The instigator of the conspiracy was Sans Morlane, canon of Saint-Nazaire Cathedral and episcopal procurator of the diocese. The conspiracy failed, but the ringleaders went unpunished. The Inquisitor was unable to secure the Pope's condemnation of Sans Morlane, whose affiliation with Catharism, however, was beyond doubt.

It is clear that most of these 'heretics' of the late 13th century were simply reformist Christians or honest people revolted by intolerance and fanaticism. It was the horror of the Inquisition that led them — when they saw that the king was unwilling to rescue them from the terror hanging over them
— to fight against French domination as well. It is well known that, in 1304, the bourgeoisie of Carcassonne and Limoux, in desperation, went so far as to propose to Ferdinand, Prince of Majorca, that they hand over to him the government of the viscounty of Carcassonne, just as, in 1275, the Viscount of Narbonne and his brothers had dared to appeal to Castile to liberate their city.

Whilst in some towns the 'Cathar party' still had enlightened and upright men, in the countryside the perfects who preached the good word had disappeared. Many had emigrated to Lombardy, and those who remained no longer possessed the culture and wisdom of their predecessors: they propagated a distorted, degenerate, and often childish doctrine. The pastor Autier[18] , in the county of Foix, had managed to restore Catharism to its true form in 1300 and even breathe new life into it, but this was merely a passing enthusiasm. And, after him, we see the last Good Man, Belibaste, adding to the traditional doctrine—whether better or worse understood—personal interpretations that discredited it or rendered it untenable. The belief in the eternity of the world, the idea that the soul was nothing more than matter, the denial of free will, the retreat of God into his infinite transcendence which rendered him utterly alien to this world—all this led the simple folk to pay attention solely to matter and the visible, and to make a pact with the Devil so as not to be utterly miserable. One was either a materialist or a sorcerer. Pure spiritualists were becoming rare.

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[18] Pastor Autier was condemned by the Inquisition and burned alive in Toulouse on 9 April 1311.

All that remained in people's hearts was hatred—perfectly understandable—towards Rome and the Inquisition. People continued to await the coming of the Great Monarch who would defeat both. Having once believed in Frederick II, the sworn enemy of the papacy, they now believed in another Frederick, the son of Peter of Aragon, King of Sicily. The prophecies circulating in Italy amongst the Patarines had reached the believers in the county of Foix. Around the year 1305, the heretic Dolcinus of Novara, a disciple of Segarelli of Parma, had received a revelation that 'this new Frederick would become emperor; he would install ten kings in Italy, condemn the pope to death, as well as the cardinals, the prelates of Rome, and all the clergy, except those who joined his sect; and, finally, he, Dolcinus, would be placed on the throne of blessed St Peter'. Belibaste was familiar with this prophecy—which proves he was well informed about events in Italy—and repeated it to his remaining followers, distorting it greatly and mixing it with apocalyptic sermons concerning the time 'when peoples would rise up against peoples', kingdoms against kingdoms, and where we would witness 'a war of all against all'. 'There would come,' he said, 'a king of the line of the kings of Aragon — the memory of King Peter, slain at Muret, remained very much alive — that he would feed his horse at the altar of Rome. Then the Church of Rome would be vanquished and the Cathar Church exalted, and its ministers honoured.' And Guilhelma Maurine, who was listening to him, asked: 'And when will all this happen, Sir?' 'When God wills it,' replied the heretic.

But neither Belibaste[19] , the last Perfect, nor the poor exiles who listened to him in Morella (Spain) witnessed the fulfilment of this vengeful prophecy. Belibaste was arrested in 1321 and burned at Villerouge-Termenès (Aude).

[19] Belibaste was betrayed by Arnaud Siere, a true secret agent of the Inquisition who, having managed to gain his trust, had him arrested in Tirvia.

A RENEWED CHRISTIANITY: A TREND AND AN INTRANSIGENT

We do not know exactly which earlier religious doctrines gave rise to Western Catharism, nor to what extent it drew on their various contributions to achieve an original synthesis. On a purely moral level, it can be seen as part of a much broader movement of a return to early Christianity: it sought to be the true Christianity of the Apostles. This is why it can largely be explained on the basis of Christianity itself: the *Gospel* of John, many passages from *the Old Testament,* and various statements by St Paul can easily be interpreted in a dualist sense; and the Cathars never fail to quote them as proof of the truth of their own doctrine.

On a philosophical level, Catharism is a form of dualism; and, even before citing the various possible origins of the phenomenon, it is necessary to attempt to define this dualism, a rather vague term that encompasses more than a single doctrinal interpretation.

The great problem that seems to have given rise to the dualist temptation — and which has also always constituted an obstacle for all theologians — is the problem of Evil. We may therefore summarise the problem, or the anguish, as one might also say: how could a good God, a God of love, permit the existence of Evil?

Theologians' efforts have generally focused on reconciling the idea of a perfect creator with the reality of an evil world. Some have sought to absolve God of all responsibility for sin; God created a perfect universe in his own image: this is paradise; but he granted man free will, and it was man who, rebelling against the Creator, chose evil. This conception hardly stands up to scrutiny, as it runs counter to the notion of an all-powerful and omniscient God. Indeed, by granting free will to his creature, God must have known how it would be used, which amounts to saying that he knowingly created an evil world: we are led to an insoluble contradiction — or, else, God is not good. Let us bear this idea in mind: we shall encounter it again, albeit in a different form.

Other theologians have attempted to circumvent the difficulty by dismissing Evil: Evil does not exist. There is only a relative Good; all creation is drawn into a vast ascending process that leads it progressively towards the supreme Good; when we speak of Evil, we are in reality referring to intermediate stages...

This view may be intellectually appealing. Yet it neither prevents nor explains, in all its painful clarity, the existence of suffering in its most monstrous forms. How can one regard all the horrors that abound in human history—torture, genocide, rape, and so on—as a 'lesser evil' or an 'intermediate stage'?

So, dualists propose another solution, perhaps shocking at first glance, certainly difficult to accept for minds steeped in the idea of a single God, creator of all things, but at least, let us acknowledge it, strictly logical. It was not a perfectly pure and good God who fashioned this universe full of infamies and dishonours. Love can only generate Love. Hate can only be conceived by hate, and it was Evil that created Evil.

In other words, at the beginning of time, there were not one but two deities; an absolutely good God, who created all that the Universe contains of Love, purity and Good; and an absolutely evil God, to whom all the Evil in the universe must be attributed. These two contradictory creations mingled to produce the world as we know it and, more particularly, humanity.

From this perspective, it is clear that man's spiritual destiny consists in eliminating the evil creation within himself, so that he may devote himself to, and identify entirely with, Good.

This is the starting point. However, from this basic conception arise various doctrines which we can link to two major currents: 'absolute dualism' and 'moderate dualism'.

This line of thought, which would come to form the very essence of Catharism, can already be found in embryonic form among certain Christian thinkers, including even the most orthodox, such as Saint Augustine, and others less well-known, such as Lactantius or Origen. Indeed, we can say that these philosophers espoused all the ideas which, taken to their logical extremes, later suggested to the Cathars the theory of the two opposing principles, Good and Evil.

The great problem for dualists lies in determining whether the two creative principles are equal in value and power. It is here that the essential difference between Cathar dualism and Manichaeism comes into play.

For the Cathars, Good is not subject to any transformation. It is immutable — 'like the Father'. Evil, on the contrary, is subject to instability, to corruption (even to materialisation, since evil spirits defile the daughters of men). Only one can do Good. The other possesses the fateful gift of freedom — the moral image of transformation; and St Augustine himself asserts that, in the creature, free will always turns towards Evil: does true perfection not consist in being absolutely independent of Evil and not in 'being able' to do it?

The two principles are, therefore, of a fundamentally different essence. But they possess, for the Cathars, a common point: they are spirits, whereas, for ancient Manichaeism, the principle of Evil was essentially matter, monstrous bestiality, absolute disorder, blind chance.

To be honest, it is exceedingly difficult to link Catharism to specific earlier doctrines or movements. At best, we can identify, in certain currents, elements—or rather tendencies—that foreshadow

Catharism. These are movements generally little known because they were very limited in space and time.

Thus, two distinctly dualistic conceptions are found in Spain, from 370 to 380, amongst the Priscillianists. More significant are the Bogomils of Bulgaria—we shall return to this case. However, the most evident origins of Catharism (though undoubtedly less exclusive and less direct than has been claimed) remain Jewish and Christian Gnosticism, as well as, to a large extent, ancient Manichaeism, whose fundamental method is identical, despite very different conclusions.

Catharism can be considered a form of Gnosticism, as it seeks to liberate souls through complete knowledge (above all of Good and Evil); subsequently, Catharism developed an esoteric content in contrast to the traditional formulas of Christianity: its commentaries on *the Lord's Prayer* are perfectly revealing in this regard. Furthermore, there are undeniable similarities between the doctrine proposed by Manes Mani regarding the creation of Evil and the Cathar viewpoint. However, this ideological comparison is not sufficient to prove that Catharism stems directly from Manichaeism. In any case, we know practically nothing about the true thinking of the early dualist—or neo-Manichaean—movements that emerged in France and Western Europe around the 11th century. Were the heretics burned at Orléans in 1022 truly dualists, and if so, did their beliefs foreshadow those of the Occitan Cathars of 1209?

Much has been said about the connection between the Cathars and the Manichaeans, via the Bulgarian Bogomils and, earlier, the Paulicians who emerged in the Byzantine Empire between the 8th and 10th centuries. Among the earliest dualist sects generally associated with Manichaeism[1]we may mention: the *Phoundaites,* the *Koudougères,* the *Babouni,* the *Pophles* and the *Bugres.* From the Cathars to the Bogomils and from the Bogomils to the Paulicians, the kinship seems quite indisputable. However, far more than by Manichaeism, the earliest Western dualist movements were inspired by the early Christian tradition, which was itself often imbued, in the East, with Zoroastrianism and Gnosticism.

However, ever since Catharism emerged, its opponents have, with some apparent justification, equated it with Manichaeism and even, quite specifically, with the Manichaeism of Mani, which, in St Augustine's time, was still very powerful in certain regions of the Roman Empire, particularly in Africa. There is no reason not to attribute the emergence in Occitania, and elsewhere, of various heretical movements to the persistence of ancient Manichaean centres (this religion is recorded in 355 in southern Gaul, in Aquitaine, and later in Spain, at the end of the 4th century). It is known that some 'Manichaean' Christians remained in Provence until quite late. The troubadour Raimund Féraut tells us, in *The Life of Saint*

[1] It was the great esoteric movement of the early Christian Church. The elimination of the Gnostics by the papacy steered Christianity towards a resolutely esoteric path, intensifying the politicisation and Caesarism of the Roman Church.

Honoratus — based on a Latin original: **Vita sancti Honorati**, which we possess — that Girart of Vienna, son of Nayme, supported, at that time, the Manichaeans of Arles against the followers of Saint Honoratus, who had become archbishop of that city. He sent an army which defeated Saint Honoratus and installed, in his place, the Manichaean Sevi. But the King of France, having learnt of the news, rushed there with his troops, challenged Girard to a great battle and stripped him of all his lands. The people of Arles then called upon Saint Honoratus and expelled Sevi and all the heretics 'who fled to Toulouse, where they still remain'. These are certainly chivalric legends from the 'Charlemagne Cycle' in which Pepin, Charlemagne and their barons play their usual roles; and we suspect that Raimund Féraut, who died in 1325, was tempted to project onto this fabulous past the events that took place in Languedoc in 1209 and which were not so far removed; and to transform Girart of Vienne into the predecessor of the great Occitan lords who protected heresy, and of the Carolingian king, the first 'crusader'. But how could he have invented these struggles, so contrary to the customs and practices of his time, which in the Christian communities of the 5th century effectively pitted, in the election of bishops, the Manicheans—who claimed to be the only true Christians—against the others, who claimed to be Roman Catholics? On the other hand, Raimon Féraut is the only writer of the Middle Ages, to my knowledge, who, rather than linking Catharism to a theoretical Manichaeism, suggests a precise connection: the Manicheans of Arles, 'expelled from Provence, set off for Toulouse, ashamed and angry (*que s'en van a Tholosa vergoynos e irat*) and infested the city with their heresy (*e an de l'heregia bautugat la ciptat)*'; and, he adds, they would still be there had they not been destroyed by fire!

Perhaps more characteristic, if not more convincing, are the traditions relating to Mont-Wimer in Champagne. In 1042, 1048 and again in 1144, this site is described as a centre of Neo-Manichaeism. In 1239, an auto-da-fé was held there in the presence of the Count of Champagne, Thibaut le Chansonnier, and the Dominican monk Robert, a great 'inquisitor and former heretic, who, with the hatred of an apostate, burned all those who had once worshipped him. The number of victims rose to around 180. Now, it is curious that in a French 'dict', published in 1883 by Gaston Raynaud, the *Dict de la Jument du Diable,* which alludes to this auto-da-fé, traditions linked to Mont-Wimer and relating to ancient Manichaeism are also mentioned. Albéric des Trois-Fontaines had already spoken of Fortunatus who, expelled from Africa by Saint Augustine, is said to have settled in Champagne, where he converted a bandit chief named Wimer to his doctrine. The poet of *La Jument du Diable*, for his part, tells us that this Wimer was expelled from Lombardy by Saint Augustine... Clearly, we must not attribute more credence to these legends than they deserve. However, their reference to Fortunatus is indeed unsettling. We are left with the impression that the chronicler and the poet have mixed everything up: chronology and history. Lombardy undoubtedly presents itself to us as a reminder of Saint Augustine's stay in Milan; perhaps because it was known, in the 13th century, that Catharism had been brought from Lombardy. But why did Fortunatus not come to Champagne, and why is

Who did Wimer fail to convert? Unfortunately, we do not know the exact beliefs of Leutard, that Champagne native who broke crosses and refused to pay tithes. Was he a descendant of those 'bandits' converted to Manichaeism by Fortunatus? Had he turned to heresy under the influence of Bogomil missionaries who had simply revived, at Mont-Wimer, an ancient centre of Roman Manichaeism? But is it possible that these missionaries ever reached Champagne?

It is generally accepted that Occitan Catharism came from Bulgaria, passing through Croatia and Lombardy; Venice certainly played an important role in this transmission, although its route from Provence to Languedoc is not clearly established, let alone the manner in which it reached Orléans and Champagne, even before it had manifested itself in Languedoc. In truth, the two hypotheses are by no means contradictory. There were undoubtedly Manichaean revivals in France and Western Europe—those of the 11th century—which owe nothing to Bogomil propaganda, or which were simply 'reactivated' by it; and others which owe practically all their content to it. I do not think it appropriate to dwell further on these controversial issues.

What is certain is that, in 1167—or 1172—a pope of the dualist Church of Constantinople, Nicetas, whose beliefs stemmed from those of the Church of Dragovici (strictly dualist and said to have been founded by Mani himself), presided over a Cathar council at Saint-Félix-de-Caraman and was regarded as the true spiritual leader, recognised by all. In the presence of numerous bishops, including Bernard de Simorre, Bishop of Carcassonne, and Bernard Raimon, Bishop of Toulouse, Nicetas established an administrative structure, defined the Cathar dioceses of Albi, Toulouse, Agen, Carcassonne, 'France' and Lombardy, and performed several ordinations. In particular, he conferred the *consolamentum* on Sicard Celerrier, Bishop of Albi.

Whatever, then, the origin of Bogomilism may be, and setting aside the question of whether it stems from the Paulicians—and above all from the Paulicians of ancient Manichaeism—we must attribute to 1167 (or 1172) not, as is evident, the emergence of Occitan Catharism, but its establishment as an organised doctrine. From 1167 or 1172 onwards, it took a philosophical turn towards absolute dualism. And this ideological shift coincides with its establishment in Languedoc and the setting up of its hierarchy within the framework of clearly defined dioceses.

We should not overstate their dogmatic rigidity: there have always been 'moderate' influences within this absolute dualism, stemming from Catholicism, or from the Waldensians, or from the Bogomils themselves. As some Bulgarian scholars still believe today, the Bogomil faction of moderate dualists had also sent missionaries to France to counter the influence of the 'absolutists'. Occitan Catharism and, above all, Italian Catharism underwent, between 1167 and 1300, variations that brought them closer to one or the other form of dualism. But we must admit that, on the whole, the Occitans always remained faithful—like the

Albanians of Italy — to the Bogomil absolutist doctrine. Moreover, intellectual contacts never ceased to exist between Occitania, Italy and (Bogomil) Croatia, and it is possible, as certain documents seem to establish, that there existed in Croatia or Bosnia a 'pope' of absolute dualism, in reality a simple 'spiritual master' recognised simultaneously by the heretics of France, Italy and Hungary. Bartholomew of Carcassonne appears to have been its representative in the Albigensian region.[2] On the eve of the 'crusade' (1209), Catharism was firmly rooted in the Languedoc. The clergy, bishops and deacons were ready for action. Its influence gradually spread to all strata of the population: lords, minor knights, burghers, merchants, craftsmen and peasants. Women, in particular, were won over to the cause.

In 1250, Raynier Sacconi lists twelve Churches or bishoprics in France, Occitania and Italy: in France, the Church of France; in Italy: the Church of the Albanians[3] (Desenzano), the Church of Concorezzo, those of Bagnolo, Vicenza, Florence, and the Valley of Spoleto; in Occitania, the Churches of Toulouse, Albi, Carcassonne and Agen (to which we must add the Church of Razès, established in 1225 by the Cathar council of Pieusse [Aude] and whose existence Sacconi seems to have been unaware of).

Furthermore, in the East and the Byzantine Empire there were: the Church of Eslavonia (Dalmatia), that of the Latins of Constantinople, the Greek Church of Constantinople, the Church of Philadelphia in Romania (Byzantine Empire), the Church of Bulgaria (moderate dualism), and the Church of Dragovici (absolute dualism).

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[2] Ch. Thouzellier: *An unpublished Cathar treatise from the early 13th century*, based on Durand of Huesca's *Liber contra manicheos* (University Publications of Louvain, 1961, pp. 30, 31).

[3] Albanians: the term derives from 'Albania'. Most of the founders of Italian Catharism drew inspiration from Dalmatian and Albanian Bogomilism.

ARCHAIC RITES.
A NEW SPIRITUALITY.

We possess a very small number of dogmatic works written by Cathars: two ritual texts, one in Occitan and the other, an incomplete one, in Latin, published by Rev. Dondaine (following the *Book of the Two Principles*); an anonymous 13th-century *Cathar treatise* attributed to Bartholomew of Carcassonne[1] and included in Durand of Huesca's *Liber contra Manicheos*, which quotes it in part to refute it (ed. Thouzellier, Louvain, 1964), and the *Book of the Two Principles* (*Liber de duobus principiis*), attributed to the Italian Jean de Lugio[2] (ed. Dondaine, Rome, 1939). To these four works should be added a *Cathar Apology* and a *Gloss on the Pater,* appearing in a manuscript from the 'Dublin Waldensian Collection' and recently published by M. Venckeleer (1960). These treatises provide valuable information—the *Book of the Two Principles* above all—on important points of doctrine, but they never set it out in its entirety or in a continuous manner. Consequently, to gain a better understanding of it, one must turn to what the Catholic controversialists said and to what the documents of the Inquisition teach us.

It is not a question of systematically doubting the explanations provided by the controversialists: we merely regret that, at times, they have conveyed the theories of their adversaries in a rather haphazard manner without emphasising, as would have been necessary, the essential dialectical connections. Deprived of its explanatory context, Cathar thought may appear poorer and less coherent than it appeared to those who formulated it. The spirit of the age dictated that as much, if not more, importance be attached to minor differences concerning dogmas and rites as to major metaphysical differences. Everything is therefore placed on the same level: the fundamental characteristics of dualism, the moral prescriptions arising from it, and religious ceremony.

As for the documents of the Inquisition, they shed light above all—given that the heretics being interrogated were often quite ignorant of philosophy and theology—on popular Catharism, which was rife with childish legends and myths. Thus, we should only use these myths as 'sources' when we are certain that they were already 'socialised' in the 13th century, that is, widely disseminated in a more or less invariable form, independent, to a certain extent, of individual creative imagination. It is also necessary to know their abstract meaning, clearly formulated by an intelligent Cathar; or, strictly speaking, that this abstract meaning emerges immediately and without doubt

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[1] Bartholomew or Barthélémy was, in the 1220s, one of the most ardent propagators of Catharism in the diocese of Agen, for which he was responsible.

[2] Jean de Lugio or de Bergame. We know of him through Raynier Sacconi: *Summa de catharis,* reissued by A. Dondaine (Istituto storico domenicano, S. Sabina, Rome, 1939).

possible interpretations of figurative symbolism: the Cathars often provided explanations for their parables or *exempla*. Only this explanation should be accepted. This means that the interpretation of crude legends — to which, for many heresiologists, the dualist doctrine is reduced — should be left to ethnographers or psychologists of the unconscious, who would make far fewer errors in this field than historians of religion. It is, in any case, more prudent and more 'scientific' to explain the myth by the doctrine than the doctrine by the myth.

It is customary—though the heretics themselves never used this rather radical terminology, to which I shall express many reservations in the section of this book devoted to their philosophy—to distinguish, in France and Italy, between so-called absolute dualists and moderate dualists. In Italy, the *Concorenses* (from the Concorezzo region, near Milan), also known as *the Garatenses* in the 1240s (named after one of their first bishops, Garathus), were moderate dualists; the Albanenses (from the Desenzano region, Lake Garda), absolute dualists. In France, it is accepted that, at least from 1167 (the date on which the famous Council of Caraman was convened and under the influence of Pope Nicetas[3], who presided over it), the majority of Occitan Cathars were Albigensians (Albigensian), that is to say, absolute dualists.

To simplify matters, we shall provisionally adopt, with regard to their respective dogmas and religious mythologies, this classic and convenient division into absolute and moderate dualism.

Moderate dualism

Although it encompasses many differences that are quite difficult to distinguish, and despite very complex and contradictory ideological implications, so-called 'moderate' dualism can, schematically, resemble a monistic conception; to begin with, moderate dualists acknowledge the existence of a single God, a universal Creator, from whom all things proceed, including Evil, Satan, Hell, etc.

On this crucial point, moderate dualism is therefore not in profound contradiction with traditional Christian doctrine. On the other hand, it departs markedly from the foundations of dualist doctrine, as we have previously outlined.

Even in the second phase of the creation of the world, 'moderate' dualism remains 'relative'. God created the Devil, who was originally a good spirit but subsequently became corrupted and rebelled against his Father. Some of these moderate dualists went so far as to attribute two sons to God: Jesus Christ and Lucibel — or rather, Lucifer. So far, nothing out of the ordinary from the point of view of orthodox Christians, for whom Lucifer is also a Son of God.

Simply put, Lucifer, transformed into Satan and cast out by his father, decided to build a world that would be his own creation. Here, opinions differ.

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[3] Nicetas was pope of the Cathar Church of Constantinople in 1170.

According to some, Satan built his universe from pre-existing elements, created by God and corrupted by his infernal intervention; according to others, he inserted these divine elements into an imperfect order. He thus, in a sense, ordered matter, divided the elements, carried out his evil creation, fashioned bodies, always with the permission of the true God who intended, like Lactantius's God, that there should be 'variety and opposing forces in the Universe'. Naturally, the Devil's creative powers were very limited. He was unable to breathe life into the clay automatons he had fashioned without God's help! He therefore asked God for lesser angels, who, though willing, ended up—half by force, half reluctantly—allowing themselves to be confined within bodies. Other myths recount that Lucifer first seduced the angels, isolated them in separate bodies — 'They wept when they found themselves separated and different' (*dissimiles forma*) — and forced one, Adam, to engage in carnal intercourse with another (Eve). But his power over them was always precarious.

According to one of these myths, God breathed upon the clay statue to animate it, at Lucifer's request; but as soon as it found itself animated, the statue exclaimed:
'Lucifer, I am no longer yours!' These captive angels, Adam and Eve and their descendants, may ultimately deserve salvation: they possess free will and do good or evil according to their nature, but of their own free will. They will ultimately be judged on the basis of their merits, and will attain either eternal hell or paradise. God, however, took pity on them. And, first and foremost, on Adam and Eve, whom he forgave when the period of their exile and wanderings came to an end
— there was, we believe, only migration from body to body for the first couple. He simultaneously granted the possibility of salvation to the souls that resulted from them (for moderate dualists did not believe in reincarnation, but professed *traducianism:* according to this theory, devised by Tertullian to explain the transmission of original sin, and which Saint Augustine adopted for a time, and later abandoned, the soul of children is generated by the soul of their parents, just as bodies come from their bodies). He therefore caused his Son — or Word — Jesus Christ to descend to earth, as well as the Holy Spirit.

Regarding the nature of the Son and the Holy Spirit, proponents of moderate dualism do not always agree: some regard them as inferior to the Father. Others identify them completely with God, remaining faithful to the indissoluble Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

For moderate dualists, and also for absolute dualists, the mission of Jesus Christ relates essentially to his teaching. Christ's sacrifice has no living, concrete value. One might even ask whether they were concerned with the historical reality of the figure of Jesus. Historical details matter little; they have only symbolic value: what counts is the teaching.

Jesus did not manifest himself in a real body, in a body of flesh and blood (since matter is a satanic creation). His appearance was purely ghostly and resembled an illusion more than reality.

The Cathars are thus closer to the proponents of Docetism who deny the corporeal reality of Jesus. But there are varying degrees of Docetism: some maintain that Christ took on an angelic form, others that his body, composed of a pure substance, free from all corruption, was similar to that which fallen spirits had been granted in heaven whilst awaiting redemption.

As regards other heavenly beings, moderate dualists have not always been in agreement. John the Baptist is sometimes regarded as a demon; or as an envoy of God: he is said to have been born of Elizabeth alone, through the action of the Holy Spirit. The Virgin is at times a real woman, at other times an angel who came down from heaven together with Jesus Christ and who, consequently, possesses only the appearance of a body.

There will be no resurrection of the flesh, but a Final Judgement (as for Catholics), after which — according to certain moderate dualists — the Angels Adam and Eve, 'who will have passed through the bodies of Enoch, Abraham, Noah and the prophets, and obtained their forgiveness in the bodies of Simon and Anna, will once again be admitted into the glory of God': a rather curious scheme of reintegration, perhaps drawn from the Kabbalah, or rather from the reincarnationist theories of absolute dualists. The souls of the righteous will be rewarded and will find their glorious bodies in Heaven. Those of the wicked will be condemned. There is no purgatory nor degrees of bliss or condemnation: all sins are equal.

The world will be undone (as a satanic creation) and reduced to its elements (the original chaos drawn by God from nothing). After the Apocalypse, the devil will dwell, with the souls he has seduced, in this chaos, which will become for him a hell, a place of torment...

We see, from this brief exposition of their doctrines, that the moderate dualists differed from the Catholics only in the importance they attributed to Lucifer in the creation of the world and of physical man. For the Catholics, Lucifer was the prince of the world. For the Cathars, he was its organiser and, in part, its creator: with God's permission and help, he had set the elements free (eternal or belonging to the divine order, depending on the myths) and created the visible bodies. But his role and his power were temporary: 'Give me time,' he is said to have told God, 'and I shall give you everything back!'

Absolute dualists were, in relation to Roman Catholicism, far more radically heretical.

Absolute dualism

Only the absolute dualists were truly dualists. For them, there were two equally eternal principles: a god of Being and Good who had created all good things, the invisible, incorruptible world of spirits; and,

on the other hand, a Root of Evil, an evil god of corruption, whose material and chaotic manifestation would have no end. There is, therefore, a good eternity — infinitely stable — and an evil eternity, that of matter, consisting rather of an indefinite duration perpetually agitated by contradictory changes; elements (air, fire, water, earth) of incorruptible matter, a sort of spiritual principles of matter, and coarse and unstable elements: those that make up this world[4] ; spiritual souls and souls that are slightly spiritualised and perhaps purely material (?); in short, set against the luminous creation, a formless creation, destined for corruption, darkness, death, and nothingness.

The Principle of Evil, so the myths go, one day managed to take hold of the angelic souls, suddenly appearing in the heavens of the true God. The absolute dualists were in the habit of concocting extravagant fables—though, poetically speaking, highly significant ones—to express the causes and twists and turns of this cosmic drama. Satan is said to have offered the angels free will, that is, the (fallacious) knowledge of Good and Evil (the power to 'know' Evil without doing it!), and, above all, the joys inherent in the pleasure of living: selfishness, carnal pleasure (which gives rise to materialisation), the domination of the weak (the feudal hierarchy!), etc.

It is significant that the two scholars whose treatises we possess, Bartholomew of Carcassonne and Jean de Lugio, do not display the same imagination and confine themselves, in one case, to a simple compilation of quotations from Scripture accompanied by brief philosophical commentaries; in the other, to a purely dialectical exposition. We must follow their example and focus solely on the intelligible substance of these myths: some of God's angels, they suggest, were defeated by Satan, either through cunning or by force. This means that they possessed neither the necessary intellectual power to reduce the content of the satanic temptation to nothing, nor sufficient ontological vigour to oppose the 'displacement' that the devil forced them to suffer (he seduced their 'souls', not their bodies or 'spirits'). The angels who lost divine grace did not, therefore, possess free will; they were compelled, for all eternity, due to their ontological insufficiency, to fall into decay, to 'tend towards nothingness'. Thus, the three mythical phases of the cosmic drama become very clear:

a) Satan enters heaven.

b) He seduces or subjugates angels predestined to do evil from the outset and sends them to earth: he materialises them.

c) He fought against the faithful angels, but could not defeat them, for they were, by their very nature, indissolubly bound to their own essence, to God and to Goodness. Sin was therefore committed in heaven, just as Lactantius believed. There are two kinds of angels of Evil: those who were seduced and those who were captured. The former are the demons, the latter are men. The

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[4] This doctrine is akin to alchemical conceptions based on the four essential states of matter, which constitute the ideal structures of creation, with earth symbolising the solid, water the liquid, air the gaseous, and fire the fiery or radiant.

Absolute dualists did not always agree amongst themselves regarding the nature of the former. Some believed that the seduced demons had always been elect, that they had been created by the Devil, or that they were eternal, like him. Others believed that they had been corrupted by the evil principle, but for all eternity. It is this — due to a lack of documentation — one of the most obscure points of Cathar metaphysics.

In any case, the evil angels did not sin of their own free will: they were subjected to Evil in accordance with a necessity inherent in their essence. Everything in the dualist system is predestination; everything proceeds mechanically. The work of Evil is necessary; so too is definitive liberation.

The angels captured by Satan are kept in reserve and are introduced into bodies as carnal acts take place. They must reincarnate, in human form or in animal form (more rarely) — three, seven, nine times or more — until they learn, through a kind of passive experience, that unhappiness coincided with Evil and that it was important to avoid both. The mechanism of reincarnation will only end when all souls have been saved[5] . For each individual, the cycle of reincarnations necessarily culminated in access to a perfect body, in which they received the *consolamentum.* Some Cathars maintained that, in the case of a woman, the final incarnation took place in a male body. However, this belief does not appear to have been shared by the enlightened perfect ones, who professed that the soul is genderless and that there are no men or women in heaven.

In the end, all souls created by God will be saved. Those that are not belong not to the good God. A new difficulty, linked to the one I mentioned earlier: how can there be spirits, created by the God of spirits, that do not return, in the end, to their origin? Would they be material, 'hylic' souls, similar to the demons of ancient Manichaeism, coarse and bestial? Or would they have been materialised for all eternity, and necessarily through the universal corruption which, by right, may affect all divine creation, but which, in truth, only 'annihilates' those entities which, by nature, are predestined to love Nothingness?

At the end of time, the satanic world order will be destroyed[6]. But Satan will always be replaced by the sum of chaotic elements. The Earth, abandoned by all good entities and liberated souls, will burn and become a veritable hell, that is, a natural and exclusive domain of the Devil, left to his own devices. He will then move through his impotent eternity, unable to reach the being or corrupt it. He will be able to do nothing more against the God of light and against the righteous.

From these statements we can deduce the extreme complexity of this system and the subtle balance upon which it rests. It is therefore worth highlighting certain

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[5] This conception is very close to the Hindu theory of Karma and, in particular, to more recent Vedic thought, such as that of Aurobindo, who integrated Western evolutionism into the traditional system.

[6] As creation was essentially a temporal succession, the Cathars identified time with Evil.

points which, taken in isolation, may seem rather obscure, and which we can only understand if we place them within the broader context of Catharism.

Since absolute dualism was also absolute determinism, we might fail to grasp the very meaning of this colossal struggle waged, in eternity, by the two great principles of Good and Evil. Given that everything is decided from the outset, can we speak of a struggle, if the notion of war, of conflict, always implies uncertainty as to the final outcome?

We are therefore compelled to emphasise a notion that clearly distinguishes Cathar dualism from ancient Manichaeism: for the Cathars, although the two principles share the universe between them, they are fundamentally unequal in nature and value. The struggle is already won by the good God, and not by Satan, who is, by nature, a blind, chaotic, or even stupid being. And Satan will ultimately be defeated, for at the end of time the pure souls will be reclaimed by the God of Good, their creator.

But Satan, though defeated, will not be destroyed, for he will continue to exist in his Gehenna. Hence the affirmation of the eternal nature of the two principles...

The system of Jean de Lugio

Around 1240, the absolute dualist Jean de Lugio of Bergamo, the eldest son of the Bishop of Desenzano[7] , decided to lend greater philosophical rigour to absolute dualism and resolve the difficulties I noted earlier. He therefore composed a voluminous treatise, now lost, but of which Raynier Sacconi has bequeathed to us a brief analysis and a collection of short treatises gathered under the same title: *Book of the Two Principles,* which we possess.

Jean de Lugio's main ideas are, *broadly speaking,* those of all absolute dualists. He systematised them as follows:

1) Both creations are co-eternal with their creators: they flow from them 'as rays emanate from the Sun'. Therefore, Evil, devils, and corrupt souls (unsteady in their being, false and unstable) have always existed.

2) Corruption — the work of the evil principle — has wreaked havoc upon the creatures of the true God: 'Not even the stars are pure' (*Stellae non sunt mundae*). There were, therefore, catastrophes in the higher realms, and sin was committed in heaven (this idea is not new: it is found in the Bible, where angels are seen fornicating with the daughters of men, and in Lactantius's *Divine Institutions*).

However, universal corruption is, in fact, limited by the excessive abundance of being and eternity that exists in the true God, and by the very laws of necessity (the benefit of trials can no longer be nullified: the Devil cannot prevent the souls he has corrupted, but who have escaped him through suffering, from being transformed and becoming incorruptible). On the other hand, God is

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[7] The eldest son was the bishop's *alter ego* and successor. His deputy was the younger son, who in turn became the eldest son upon the bishop's death.

all-powerful in goodness, and—this is Jean de Lugio's deepest conception—
— can enhance the being of certain creatures as he wishes if they are on the path to liberation. It was thus that he preserved Christ from any stain, from all sin, that he made the 'spirits' of men sinless, and that he will make incorruptible the souls that pass through the necessary trials.

THE MORALITY OF THE CATHARIC ' '

The Perfect Ones

Although they did not share the same metaphysical views, absolute dualists and moderate dualists adhered to the same rules of theoretical and practical morality, which were, moreover, not very different from those of Roman morality and asceticism. These rules stemmed from the realisation that this world is evil and that the Devil is its prince: it was necessary to free oneself from Evil and the material world, striving to have as little contact with them as possible, and devoting oneself to the spiritual life: to live in the invisible rather than the visible. But not all Cathars were at the same level of spirituality: some were still at the bottom of the ladder, whilst others were already approaching the top. This is why Catharism drew a sharp distinction between the mass of the faithful, whom it called 'believers', and the small group of initiates it designated as 'perfects'. These perfect ones were, in the exact sense that St Paul attributes to the word *perfecti* — 'We who are perfect' (Philippians 3:15 and 1 Corinthians 2:16) —, Christians already 'formed', but not yet 'consummated' in perfection. Theoretically, by virtue of divine grace, or as a consequence of previous incarnations, they were set on the path to liberation. In truth, the perfecti were the 'good Christians' who had received the *consolamentum* and the power to confer it in turn. They constituted the Cathar clergy. It was from among them that deacons were chosen — pastors who served as intermediaries between the episcopate and the ordinary believers — as well as bishops and the 'major sons' and 'minor sons' (potential successors to the bishops and their coadjutors).

The Perfects were subject to an extremely strict moral code. They were required to avoid not only the mortal and venial sins of Catholicism, but also any sins they might commit against the rule of their order:

They were forbidden to engage in carnal intercourse. If they were married, they were required to free themselves from the bonds of marriage.

Murder—the gravest sin—was also forbidden to them, as was the killing of animals. They were forbidden to wage war, to take part in judicial reprisals, and even to participate in any way in so-called acts of justice (civil or ecclesiastical). All disputes were to be settled through arbitration. They applied themselves zealously when chosen as arbitrators.

Cowardice in the face of suffering and death was considered a sin, for the Cathars believed that the principal virtue—the only one that transcends death, the one that enables and conditions all others—was courage.

The Perfects were not to lie. They were not to swear.

They could not eat meat. Their diet consisted of fish, vegetables and bread. Furthermore, they frequently fasted on bread and water.

Finally, they were obliged to lead a truly spiritual life, to live in contempt of their bodies and, consequently, to pray much, to meditate; and also to forget themselves for the sake of others, to devote themselves to their neighbours. Many perfects cared for the sick; they were doctors and surgeons and, at the same time, comforters of souls. In principle, they were morally obliged to practise a profession, but, for the most part, the duties of their ministry were enough to keep them occupied.

Since the presence of the Spirit freed them from Evil, the perfect were considered free and, consequently, fully accountable. In theory, they were sinless for the same reason, but as they were still in the flesh and subject, to a certain extent, to the power of the Devil, they possessed, in law, only the power not to sin (whereas ordinary believers were not free from sinning). It is likely that some of them—such as the perfect one mentioned in the texts, who sat on his doorstep, motionless and impassive like an Indian sage—did indeed attain impeccability. But for most of them, this virtual impeccability meant above all that, by sinning, they destroyed themselves, so to speak, and were forced to undergo terrible and prolonged mortifications and to restart their entire initiation in order to regain the state of grace: the sins committed by the perfect were sins against the Spirit (who dwelt within them). The doctrine held that they could not be forgiven, or that they would be forgiven only with great difficulty.

This very particular conception brings Catharism close to all the great esoteric and initiatory traditions, particularly Hinduism and Sufism, where we find this idea of the absolute responsibility of the ‘enlightened one’, of the
‘the animated being’, whose faults, though minor at first glance, are infinitely more serious because they are committed knowingly, in a state of heightened consciousness and also of total self-mastery, whereas the non-animated being, the mere adept, is blinded by his ignorance, subject to an inexorable law of cause and effect, and therefore not accountable.

These considerations clearly demonstrate, if it were still necessary, the initiatory nature of Catharism. To illustrate this attitude, we may quote Christ’s words:
‘Before my coming, your sins would have been forgiven; after my coming, nothing will be redeemed for you.’

The believers

Contrary to what is sometimes written, sins were absolutely the same for believers and for the perfect. Only the simple

Believers (who were neither free nor truly responsible for their actions, and who had to wait through several reincarnations before they could become so) were treated with great leniency. When they sinned, it was the devil who sinned within them. They were not obliged to live an ascetic or mystical life: they could marry and eat meat. It was enough for them to practise the moderate virtues expected of men of their time.

Note how closely this vision of a progressive ascent of beings through successive reincarnations aligns with the thought of Aurobindo, and also how closely it resembles contemporary evolutionary theories.

But ordinary believers were not as left to their own devices as was intended: the Cathar Church never ceased to watch over them and indoctrinate them. As is evident, it counted on successive lives to improve them: no one is good until their time comes. And, for many of them, that time had not yet come. But it was useful for the believer, obliged to improve over time, to demonstrate this progress by showing good dispositions that corresponded to the hope that the next reincarnation would be less evil than the previous one. As he did not ask to receive the *consolamentum* of ordination, he demonstrated that he had not yet attained the necessary state of purification. But the fact that he claimed to be a 'believer' proved, on the other hand—and also the honest life he led—that he was on the path to liberation. Thus, the Good Men instructed them and asked them to think about their salvation, it being understood that, if they sought it, by virtue of that determinism which Roman Catholicism had propagated, 'it was because they had already found it'. When they married, they were warned that their soul was in danger and that they might be reincarnated many times yet. They were advised to renounce the carnal pleasures
— that breed evil — as soon as they were able to do so.

In any case, the Church held sway over the believers. Whenever they encountered a perfect one, they greeted him respectfully by performing a *melioramentum.* They were obliged to attend the various religious ceremonies, the *consolamenta,* the banquets preceded by the distribution and ritual blessing of bread, the 'kisses of peace', and the sermons. They were expected to meditate on the teachings of the Good Men, to join in communal prayers, and to pray. In short, they participated at least as much in the spiritual life of their Church as Catholics did in that of Catholicism.

RITES OF THE CATARISTIC ' '

Prayer

Even in the realm of prayer, there was a difference between the pure and the simple believers. The Cathars knew of only one true prayer, the Lord's Prayer, which was simultaneously a creed, an act of hope, and a plea for grace. But, precisely for this reason, no one could say this prayer without

first receiving a kind of initiation. How could simple believers call God 'Our Father' if, not having yet freed themselves from matter, or not having yet made the promise to free themselves, they remained carnal and, consequently, children of the Devil?

Ordinary believers prayed a great deal, but used only set prayers. They were forbidden to invoke the 'Father' directly, but could ask God to instil in them the desire to love what ought to be loved. Some prayers that have been preserved were probably reserved for believers, such as the famous *Payre Sant* prayer*:* 'Holy Father, just God of good spirits, you who have never been deceived, nor lied, nor erred, fearing that we might experience death in the world of the "foreign god" (the Devil), for we are not of this world nor is this world ours, make us know what you know and love what you love...' It was not forbidden for the ordinary believer to think of God, and consequently to name him, nor, a fortiori, to desire that he might enlighten his spirit and his heart.

I believe that these substitute prayers dating from classical Catharism have not been preserved. Those we know of are later. At the beginning of the 14th century, Pierre Mauri addresses Bélibaste, one of the last Cathar Perfects, as follows:
'What prayer should I say, then, if I cannot recite the *Pater noster?*' Belibaste replied that he should pray thus: 'May God our Lord, who guided the Magi Melchior, Balthazar and Caspar when they came to worship him from the East, guide me as he guided them!' To think that these 14th-century prayers were not in use in the 13th century would be evidence of a limited understanding of history. The Homens-bons of 1208 or 1244 certainly did not leave believers without recourse to prayer. It is true, moreover, that believers could recite a *Benedicte* (*Benedicte, Benedicite, Domine Deus, Pater bonorum spirituum, adjuva nos in omnibus que facere voluerimus*) and attend, as I said, ceremonies where they heard the *Pater* (the Blessing of the Bread, for example).

The improvement

But the essential rite, the one through which the believer affirmed his or her loyalty to the Cathar Church almost daily, was the *melioramentum*[8] (an Occitan word Latinised as *melioramentum*). 'Adoration' (in the purely liturgical sense) or *melioramentum* was, for the Cathars, the greeting the believer offered to the Perfect One when he saw him. He 'worshipped' in him the presence of the Holy Spirit. But, at the same time, it represented a prayer through which he asked God for the grace to be 'improved'[9] , perfected.

He would kneel, bow forward three times with his hands clasped, or, at times, perform only three less pronounced bows or genuflections, saying each time: 'Bless us, Lord (as they called the Perfect One), pray for us'. The Perfect One would reply: 'God bless you!' The believer would then ask,

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[8] This Occitan term literally means 'improvement'. It refers, in fact, to the worship commonly practised in relation to the perfect.

[9] The *'melhorement'* was the only rite that the ordinary believer was strictly obliged to perform.

the grace of being brought to a successful conclusion. The godparent would reply: 'God bless you; we ask God to make you a good Christian (or a good Christian woman, as women also underwent the *rite of confirmation*) and to lead you on the right path'.

In Occitan, the formulae were: *Bon chrestian,* (*balhatznos*) *la bénédiction de Dieu e de vos!* [Good Christian, (give us) the blessing of God and yours!] The good Christian would reply: *Ajatz-la de Dieu e de nos!* (Here you have it, God's and ours!).

As can be seen, what is important in *the 'betterment'* is the fact that the believer commits to seeking a good end, that is, to receiving the *consolamentum* on their deathbed and, consequently, to becoming fully integrated into the Cathar Church. This is why Duvemoy believes, rightly in my opinion, that the first *'betterment'* must have been accompanied by a *'convenenza'*. Perhaps this still took place at the end of the 13th century. *A convenenza* was a pact that the believer entered into with the Church, under the terms of which the Church undertook to administer the *consolamentum* to him, even if he was unable to recite the *Lord's Prayer*.

The tradition of the Prayer

The 'transmission' of the Lord's Prayer and the power to recite it is, in itself, in no way heretical. 'The tradition of *the Pater,* as R. P. Dondaine[10] states (and the laying on of hands) are testimonies to an era in which confirmation was linked to baptism'. In Catharism, it constituted a kind of initiation. It was through this that one passed from the state of a simple believer to the state of a perfect one.

Naturally, although it was possible to be initiated into *the Pater* without being 'consoled' immediately afterwards, the tradition of the Prayer was generally followed by the reception of *the consolamentum* of ordination or the *consolamentum* of the dying. It was pointless for the believer to recite *the Pater* if they were not in contact with the Spirit through spiritual baptism. On the other hand, the *consolamentum* implied the prior transmission of the Prayer, since it was necessary for the neophyte to recite this prayer upon receiving it. The state of abstinence in which the believer was required to be before being initiated into *the Pater* clearly shows, moreover, that he was thus preparing himself for true spiritual life and not merely for prayer.

The believer, having observed a period of abstinence, was therefore welcomed into the assembly of the faithful. He was accompanied by a sponsor and the senior member of the community, sometimes called the Elder. Everyone washed their hands. The believer underwent his *initiation.* The *Ordained One*—the bishop, the deacon, or, at times,
the Elder—would then address him with a solemn admonition that the ritual provided the model (though the minister could introduce variations). This admonition, of great moral elevation, appealed to the faith and also to the reflection of the neophyte (who is always of an age of reason).

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[10] *Liber de duobus principiis,* followed by a fragment of a Cathar ritual, reissued by A. Dondaine (Istituto storico domenicano, S. Sabina, Rome, 1939).

It consisted of a commentary on *the Pater*. It is in this commentary, among others, that the profoundly esoteric nature of Catharism is clearly evident. Their interpretation of *the Pater* is, in fact, very different from that of Catholicism: it may seem obscure; it is, in any case, secret.

> The Cathars, as might be expected, emphasised the dualistic meaning of *the Lord's Prayer*.

The text of *the* Cathar *Pater* is as follows: 'Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our *supersubstantial* bread; forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.'

We can already see that one term has been altered: the word 'daily' has replaced the term 'supersubstantial'. However, this variant is not strictly Cathar: we find it already in St. Bonaventure and St. Thomas Aquinas. In fact, Cathar commentaries refer essentially to the formulas that can be interpreted in a dualist sense. For example: 'Thy kingdom come' means that it has not yet come.

'Deliver us from evil' naturally means: Deliver us from the Evil One, who is the tempter of the faithful and the master of this world.

'Thy will be done' also implies that it has not yet been done, for the material universe is a satanic creation.

Finally, let us note that the supremacy of good over evil is not called into question. Does the *Lord's Prayer* not proclaim that the kingdom, the power and the glory belong to God, the true God, for ever and ever?

But let us return to the ceremony of the Tradition of Prayer. The believer would then take the book held by the Elder (*the Tradition of the Book,* which had once, in the early Church, been a separate ceremony, becoming virtually indistinguishable, in Catharism, from that of *the Pater*). The Ordained (the bishop, the deacon, or, at times, the Elder) would require him to renew his promise to observe the three essential virtues: chastity, truth, and humility, and would remind him of his duty to commit the holy prayer to memory for life and to recite it in all the circumstances prescribed by the ritual. The Ordained One would then say the prayer aloud and slowly. The Elder, the first of the Good Men, or the godfather, would repeat it immediately afterwards; the recipient would repeat it in turn: he was an 'initiate'. The Ordained One, or the Elder, would say: 'We dedicate this holy prayer to you so that you may receive it from God and from us and from the Church, and so that you may say it at any moment in life.' The believer would reply: 'I receive it from God, from you and from the Church.' He would then make the *sign of the cross* again and give thanks to God. The faithful — men and women — in the presence of the believers recited the Lord's Prayer twice, with

bows [11](inclinations and genuflections). Ordinary believers took part in these *bows.* And the ceremony would sometimes conclude with a 'Kiss of Peace'.

The Perfects — like the Waldensians, for that matter — recited the *Lord's Prayer* day and night, before undertaking any important act, before facing a risk or danger; alone and in company; before eating and drinking. If they failed to do so, they were obliged to perform a (ritual) penance. Penances often consisted, in the case of minor offences, of reciting the *Lord's Prayer*.

Thus one sees the importance of this prayer. In principle, the Perfects refused the *consolamentum* to those who could not say the *Pater,* which is surprising, for in such a purified religion, inner prayer should have sufficed. But in the Middle Ages, it was believed that those who did not speak did not think. On the other hand, the perfects wished to ensure that the prayer had been recited correctly.

A believer could be initiated into *the Pater* without being 'consoled' immediately afterwards. But without prior Tradition of *the Pater,* no one could receive the *consolamentum.*

The consolamentum *of ordination*

This spiritual baptism (as opposed to St John's baptism by water, which the Cathars did not consider valid and which they sometimes—though not always—required the believer to renounce) was administered by the laying on of hands according to rituals reminiscent of those of the early Church, except in regard to the material elements: water and the anointing with oil. It constituted the essential ceremony of Catharism: it conferred the 'consolation' of the Raracleto according to apostolic tradition, and provided access to the Cathar orders. The neophyte, sometimes accompanied by the Elder of his residence and a godfather (who might be the Elder himself), was led into the meeting room. The two, or the three, performed the *improvement* before the Ordained (bishop or deacon). It was necessary for all those present to be pure or purified. The Ordained One would first make his confession, and the Elder would absolve him (for, for the Cathars, baptism performed by a minister in a state of sin was not valid). The faithful would pray—seven Sunday Prayers—that God might forgive the Ordained One his sins and hear his prayers.

Next, the men and women of the congregation asked the Ordained Minister for forgiveness for their sins. They had all symbolically washed their hands. They uttered the ritual words: *Benedicite, Parcite nobis,* and the Ordained One absolved them, saying: 'May the Holy Father, just, true and merciful, who has power in Heaven and on Earth to forgive sins, forgive you all the sins of this world and grant you mercy in the world to come'. Once all the baptised had asked forgiveness for their sins and were found to be 'pure' — the neophyte was in a state of abstinence — the ceremony proper began[12] .

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[11] From the Latin *venia*, meaning forgiveness. Hence the term 'venial sin', which is easily forgiven.

[12] It was, in fact, a symbolic return to the manner of confession practised by the early Churches.

The Ordained placed a small round table before him and, upon a white cloth, between two candles, the Book of the Gospels opened at *the Gospel* of St John. The neophyte knelt. Before receiving the Book from the hands of the Ordained, he made three bows, as when he had been presented to the assembly. The Ordained One then asked him whether he possessed the firm will to receive spiritual baptism and whether he was ready to practise all the virtues through which one becomes a good Christian (Catharism was extremely scrupulous in this regard and did not in any way seek to influence or force the will of those aspiring to holiness: in certain cases, the neophyte was asked to state repeatedly his desire to become perfect). According to the ritual, it was at this moment that he asked, after the *improvement,* for forgiveness for his faults, which was immediately granted to him by the Ordained, in the name of God and the Church. The Ordained One would take up the Book again and then begin to admonish the neophyte, as in the ceremony of initiation into *the Pater,* addressing his reason and his faith: 'Mr Pedro (for example, as he addressed him by name), you must bear firmly in mind that, at this moment, you stand for the second time before God, before Christ and the Holy Spirit, since you stand before the Church of God (...). You must understand that you are here to receive forgiveness for your sins, thanks to the prayers of good Christians and the laying on of hands'.

The Ordained One quoted many passages from Scripture that supported Cathar doctrine; the examples provided by the two rituals differ, but essentially agree.

The officiant would then place the Book upon the believer's head, recite the *Benedicite,* three *Adoremus,* seven *Pater,* and proceed to read the beginning of *the Gospel* of St John (from *In principiis* to *Gratia et veritas per Jesum Christum jacta est*). The Ordained then said: 'May God forgive you and bring you to a good end', addressing the believer, who replied: 'Amen. So be it, Lord, according to your Word'.

This was followed by the moving ceremony of the laying on of hands, that is, the actual imparting of the Holy Spirit. The believer would kneel, leaning slightly towards the table, before the Ordained Minister, who would once again place the *Gospel* of St John upon his head and lay his hands upon him. And all the other Christians present would likewise lay their right hand (or both hands) upon him.

Then everyone prayed. They recited three Adoremus, the Pater, the Gratia (Gratia Domini nostri Jesu-Christi sit cum omnibus nobis [May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with us all]), the Pardas (Benedicite, parcite nobis), three Adoremus, and another Gratia aloud. All that remained for the initiate was to kiss the Book, after making three bows: 'Benedicite, benedicite, parcite nobis', and to thank God, the Ordained and the faithful: 'May God,' he would say, 'reward you for the good you have done me for the love of God!'

And the perfector would reply, to conclude: 'May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. *Benedicite*, *parcite nobis. Amen. Fiat secundum Verbum tuum.* May the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit forgive you all your sins.' The ceremony of *the consolamentum* would often be prolonged by

two others: the *aparelhamento* or *servici* (a kind of public and solemn confession that took place once a month) and the *Kiss of Peace*. For Duvernoy, the *aparelhamento* was the monthly confession of the perfects before the deacon, or the bishop, or one of his coadjutors (the 'eldest son' or the 'youngest son'). Believers, again in Duvernoy's view[13], were allowed to attend. According to other authors, they also confessed publicly. Penances for venial sins consisted of repeating the *Our Father* and the *veniae* (genuflections).

In the kiss of peace, Christians 'made peace', with the men kissing one another and the women doing the same, after the first woman had kissed the Book upon which the presbyter had previously laid his lips.

The consolamentum *of the dying*

Alain de Lille, in the 12th century, and, in our own time, J. Duvemoy, distinguished— , with reason— the baptism of the perfects from the baptism of the
'consolates', although they were exactly the same in terms of rites. The baptism of the perfects marked, for them, entry into the Cathar orders and the voluntary renunciation of worldly things. The baptism of the consoled, conferred only on the dying, assured them of the forgiveness of their sins and, although it did not guarantee them salvation, it gave them, at least, hope. For these believers, death was a kind of grace, since, in the little time they had left to live, they could no longer commit grave sin. But they were not to eat or drink without saying the *Lord's Prayer*. It is understandable that the Cathars, being unable to say this prayer, preferred to die of starvation[14] rather than sin (by not saying the *Lord's Prayer* or in any other way). And we cannot see how to censure these fervent Christians who, according to the testimony of Raynier Sacconi, being unable to pray, asked those who served them to stop feeding them. This form of mystical suicide, known as *endura* (in Occitan: deprivation, fasting), was essentially practised between 1270 and 1300 in the county of Foix, under the influence of Pierre Autier[15] , one of the last 'Good Men'.

If the consoled person escaped death, the *consolamentum* they had received lost all its value. And if they wished to become a true perfect, they had to prepare themselves to receive the ordination *consolamentum*, which was much harder to obtain and far more meritorious.

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[13] J. Duvernoy: 'A Cathar treatise from the early 13th century', in *Cahiers d'Études cathares,* Vol. XIII, Spring 1962, Series II, No. 13.

[14] Contrary to what the legend says, this form of mystical suicide was not encouraged by the Perfects. It was the Inquisition that developed the practice, driving believers to despair.

[15] Pedro Autier, a notary from Ax, who was noted for his anti-Roman and anti-French zeal (1280–1320).

COMPROMISED LITERATURE: FOLKLORE IN THE SERVICE OF DOGMAS

In addition to the rare Cathar treatises that have come down to us—the contents of which I have drawn upon in the preceding chapters and from which some characteristic extracts are included in the appendix— the Cathars possessed other dogmatic works that have now disappeared, as well as collections of quotations from the Scriptures, from which the Perfects drew the arguments they used against the Catholics and the Waldensians in public controversies; and, finally, intended for the people, apologues that presented, in a more familiar form, the main points of the doctrine.

The records of the Inquisition have preserved some of these apologues or *exempla*[1] . Intended for believers, who were often poorly educated, they generally stem from an older traditional background of a popular nature (they were, moreover, preserved in oral literature after the disappearance of Catharism), or from orthodox legends dating back to early Christianity and more or less altered in a dualistic sense. These *exempla,* in the form we know them, date from the early 14th century, but circulated much earlier, certainly from the 12th century onwards, and with the same meaning. However, to interpret them correctly, one must take into account the doctrinal distortions to which they were sometimes subjected by the declining Cathar movement. Their interest lies in the fact that they contain a spiritual explanation which informs us of what the doctrine had become by the time they were helping to propagate it, and which warned believers—as it should now warn heresiologists—against the temptation to take these myths too literally.

The Myth of the Pelican

The *exemplum* of the Pelican was drawn from the ancient bestiaries of the Greek tradition (the Greek *Physiologos*) and the Latin tradition (the Latin *Physiologus*); and its success in Christian iconography and heterodox symbolism is well known: it has even endured into modern Freemasonry.

The Pelican is a representation of Jesus Christ. However, the fictions in which it plays a role encompass all metaphysical orientations, from strict monotheism to radical or relative theism. In the orthodox and monotheistic versions, the Pelican kills the children who have offended it (which means that Christ was compelled to punish the children, the sinners). But when he sees them dead, the Pelican revives them by sprinkling them with his blood (which means that Christ — *Christus in Passione* — revives mankind by sacrificing himself for them). In these *exempla,* the Devil plays no role other than that of tempter.

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[1] J. Duvernoy: *Le Registre d'Inquisition de l'évêque Fournier (1318–1325)* (Bibliothèque Méridionale, Privat, Toulouse, 1965, 3 volumes).

It was this tradition that was followed by Epiphanius Isidore, Hugh of Saint Victor (*De Bestiis*), and Brunetto Latini; and it is also found in *the Occitan,* non-Cathar *bestiary* of the same period. And, generally speaking, Christian iconography drew on the same inspiration, although, in certain cases, we cannot be certain that the sculptor did not give his pelican a more heterodox meaning. A deeper and less conformist study of the plastic themes of Roman art would certainly lead to the re-contextualisation, within a more dualistic symbolic framework, of certain 'images'—the Tree of Life, the Lycomus, the Pelican—which are not always as Catholic as has been claimed.

The Cathar myth, as transcribed by the scribes of the Inquisition, is very different from its orthodox equivalents: 'The Pelican was a bird as bright as the Sun and which followed the Sun on its path. It therefore left its young alone in the nest. It was during its absence that the diabolical Beast struck. When the Pelican returned, it found its young torn to pieces. It tended to them immediately and brought them back to life. But, as the pelicans had already been killed and resurrected several times, one day the father decided to hide and remain in the darkness with them. When the Beast appeared, he defeated it and prevented it from striking again."

It was easy to interpret this fable as a spiritual lesson. The following is the explanation given by the Cathar in *Bishop Fournier's Inquisition Record* (Vol. I, p. 358): 'The evil god took pleasure in destroying the good creatures that the good God had made. This continued until Christ hid his light (*déposuit vel abscondidit*), that is to say: he became incarnate in the Virgin Mary. Then he captured the god of Evil and cast him into the darkness of hell. And from that time on, the god of Evil no longer had the power to destroy the creatures of the God of Good."

It is clear that, in Belibaste's time [2](early 14th century), the power of the evil principle had weakened somewhat under the influence of Catholicism or moderate dualism. But, in essence, the doctrine had not changed much. 'There are always two uncreated principles: Good and Evil. Good created spiritual natures, and Evil, inferior in every respect to the God of Good and represented by a Beast, can only destroy and corrupt. Moreover, it retains this power only until Christ intervenes on behalf of defenceless creatures."

The idea that the pelican is a 'solar' bird that accompanies the Sun on its path certainly originates with the Cathars. It is well known that, for them, the cosmic Christ resided in the intelligible light, in the spiritual Sun. And the fact that he conceals his light is perfectly in keeping with the true dualist doctrine which held that Christ had not sacrificed himself to save mankind and that, consequently, he had not been physically incarnated by the Holy Virgin. His 'sacrifice', as the ancient Manicheans maintained, took place in heaven and consisted of freely immersing himself in the entire cosmic manifestation, in order to liberate all the fragments of the divine spirit still subjugated by the force of matter.

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[2] Belibaste, initiated into Catharism by Philippe d'Alairac, was probably the last Perfect One.

On Earth, Christ was incarnated only in the Virgin. 'Then,' says a famous Cathar prayer, 'God descended from heaven with the twelve apostles and was incarnated in the Virgin Mary'. And although the 'explanation' of *the exemplum* has been influenced by Catholic vocabulary and speaks of incarnation (in the sense, moreover, of manifestation in the visible world), it is clear that the Cathar who transmits it to us remains a Docetist: the incarnation was merely apparent. Christ does not hide his light in order to be reborn as a man from a woman's womb, but because, to defeat the prince of darkness, it is necessary to penetrate his darkness in some way. To teach men to defeat the Devil in turn, it was necessary to become visible and appear to them in a form similar to their own.

The two gods, as I said, although both are principles, are not equal in power. The good one is symbolised by a solar bird; the evil one, by an animal whose features the Cathar did not specify: might he have been thinking of the *nycticorax* (owl) or the serpent of the ancient bestiaries? Catharism generally depicted the Devil in the form of the dragon of the Apocalypse and, in any case, in the guise of a monster. But we must note that the evil principle is rarely evoked figuratively: being everywhere in the visible creation in perpetual transformation—which is its own doing—it is, in reality, nowhere to be found. And it is rare for a believer to claim to have seen it, except in the form of a material object, in the unusual shape, for example, that a tree sometimes takes on...

Christ prevails over the Devil in two ways. He possesses the power to heal the evils the Devil has inflicted upon his creatures. Essentially, he has the power to limit the Devil's malevolence forever.

The horseshoe

The 'horseshoe' *exemplum* strikes us as more specifically Cathar in nature than the others, owing to the theory of reincarnation on which it is based and which it introduces.

'A very wicked man, a murderer, had, after his death, taken possession of the body of an ox that its owner treated very harshly. He remembered having been a man. He then moved into the body of a horse belonging to a very wealthy baron. And, in the baron's household, he was less unhappy. One day, this baron, whose castle had just been taken by the enemy, jumped onto the horse and fled hastily across the rocky, wild fields. The horse got its hoof stuck between two stones and could only free itself by losing its horseshoe. Some time later, after the horse had died, the spirit entered the body of a pregnant woman and took up residence in the child she was carrying. He grew up and, as an adult, acquired the *understanding of* the Good and became perfect. One day, whilst passing with a friend near the spot where he had lost the horseshoe when he was a horse, he remembered and told the other. They set about looking for the horseshoe and found it."[3]

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[3] J. Duvemoy: *Registre d'Inquisition de l'évêque Fournier* (1318–1325).

There are several variants of this *exemplum.* This one offers a more 'convincing' structure due to the inclusion of numerous testimonies: 'A Good Man was eating and resting by a spring, with his followers. He told them that he remembered having been a horse and having drunk from that spring. One day, when his master had spurred him too hard, he had sunk his hoof into the mud and could only pull it out by leaving the horseshoe behind. 'Let us see,' he said, 'if we can find it!' All the believers began to search and found the horseshoe' (Vol. III, p. 138).

The Perfect Ones of the 13th century do not seem to have accepted the possibility of animal metempsychosis as readily as Bélibaste. However, they forbade the mistreatment of animals, which leads us to suppose that they considered them capable of receiving a human soul. By the early 14th century, everyone believed that men could be reincarnated not only as noble animals—such as oxen and horses—but also as the most vile (except for those, such as the owl, the toad and the serpent, which were regarded as essentially satanic; it is worth noting that not even a murderer sinks so low). In the era of declining Catharism, the belief that the devil inhabited the most abject animal forms certainly led people to think as well that utterly degraded souls, akin to devils, could take up residence as lowly as they.

Of all the southern heretics, the absolute dualists were the only ones to believe in the metempsychosis of humans and animals (the moderate dualists, it should be recalled, were traducianists). The theory of reincarnation was absolutely essential to the structure of the absolutist system, since the progressive yet mechanical (and unfree) purification of souls is achieved through the obligatory experience of evil and suffering across successive lives. To gain a fuller picture of the spread of Cathar thought in the 12th and 13th centuries, and even later, one would need to search patiently through the Occitan, French, Italian and German literature of the Middle Ages for all statements of Manichaean or Cathar origin which, amidst the alterations undergone by poems and romances, escaped the scrutiny of Catholic scribes. They are far more numerous than official heresiology would have us believe.

The novel **Barlaam and Josaphat*,* for example, presents us with an **exemplum** of the Unicorn, which differs significantly from the orthodox versions of the same period that we possess and which seems to trace back to an archetype heavily influenced by Eastern mysticism. Furthermore, it reflects a large number of heterodox theories. Phrases such as: *'And I immediately realised that this world was nothing but vanity*' (E vi imediatamente que este mundo não era mais do que nada e falsidade), set in a context where the Devil plays a more active role than in Catholic tradition, reveal an undeniable influence of dualist doctrine.

An Occitan treatise on the 'names of the Mother of God' (late 13th century)[4] mysteriously dissociates Lucifer from Satan, as the Cathars did. The

[4] *A 13th-century Neo-Manichaean treatise,* published by A. Dondaine (Istituto Storico Domenicano,

the Catholic treatise *Breviari d'Amor* by Matfre Ermengaut (1323), is full of ideas that 'smack of heresy' and which we find, in identical form, in *the Book of the Two Principles.* This does not prove that all these authors were heretics, but rather that the boundaries of heresy were never very clear. In those days, it was possible to be a heretic without knowing it. As for the poets, they drew inspiration from what they saw, and many of them frequented Cathar circles.

The Italian poem **Il Fiore*,* sometimes attributed to Dante, was probably composed by one of those 13th-century Epicureans, such as Farinata degli Uberti and Guido Cavalcanti (whom Dante knew). It draws its inspiration chiefly from the theories of the new Latin Averroism and the less erudite naturalism of *the Romance de la Rose*, but Cathar anti-clericalism is vigorously evident and the poet makes no secret of his sympathy for the Patarines of Florence, massacred in 1244, the year the pyre at Montségur was lit.

The same investigations, carried out with complete open-mindedness in the context of medieval German poetry, yield even better results. It seems difficult to me not to discover traces of Catharism in the work of Gottfried von Strassburg, in the anti-papal invectives of Walther von der Vogelweide and, above all, in Wolfram d'Eschenbach's *Parzival*[5], which, in some of its developments, harks back to an Iranian (Manichaean) original. When we consider that, for many clerics of the Middle Ages (the most famous of whom is Berengier of Tours, 1081), it had become impossible to admit within the same metaphysical unity—and, consequently, in the sacred host, the coexistence of spirit and matter, of light and darkness, of Redemption and sin, we are tempted to recognise, like Leonardo Olschki, that the Grail, the luminous receptacle, has no other function than to provide the penitent with spiritual nourishment sanctified by the light with which the transcendent Good God identifies and which manifests Him. The Grail host recalls the consecrated bread that was distributed to the faithful at the sacramental banquets which constituted one of the rare Cathar ceremonies[6] and where, without a priest, without an altar and without other rites, Jesus Christ was invoked solely as a mediator between the God of Light and sinful humanity dominated by the God of Darkness,

The troubadours

The Cathars and the troubadours lived side by side for over two centuries in the same Occitan regions, particularly in the counties of Toulouse and Foix, and in the viscounty of Carcassonne. They were part of the same civilisation, engaged in the same society (often within the same system of vassalage): their interests sometimes overlapped; they had the same patrons. In the castles, men-of-law and poets shared the same audience of barons and noble ladies. Their

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S. Sabina, Rome, 1939).

[5] *Parzival* is one of the origins of the famous legend of the Grail.

[6] The Cathars, who did not believe in the real presence of Christ in the consecrated host, shared, in this respect, the ideas of Origen and Tertullian.

their respective conceptions or ideologies — though fundamentally very different — reveal undeniable similarities, or rather, on certain specific points — regarding the issue of marriage, for example — a kind of convergence.

Furthermore, we know that several troubadours attacked Rome, the Church and the religious orders in many satirical poems, that others—or sometimes the same ones—took up arms in support of the Cathar barons or friends of Catharism, and that, following their defeat, they accompanied them into exile. It is therefore worth therefore, to ask ourselves about the nature of the theoretical or actual relationships that may have been established before, during and after the crusade between the Cathars and the troubadours, although it is difficult, given the current state of our knowledge, to provide a definitive answer to this question, because the very notion of a troubadour, considered independently of the very diverse backgrounds to which these poets belong, has no sociological significance whatsoever. Relatively few in number, they by no means formed a 'social' class.

Love and heresy

One might ask whether the troubadours' doctrine of love, taken as a whole, might not have been, as some modern writers have claimed, a kind of poetic and symbolic interpretation of the religious aspirations of Neo-Manichaeism, or even of its political concerns. Rossetti's book, published in 1840, **Il mistero del Amor platonico del medio evo** — which set out to demonstrate that the poems of Dante and those of *the *Fedeli d'Amore** had been composed with a philosophical and political interest and that they merely expressed, under the veil of amorous joy, the opinions and hopes of the anti-papists, imperialists and Ghibellines — exerted an enormous influence on many writers (among whom was Napoléon Peyrat)[7] who also began to seek the key to Provençal Love in Cathar esotericism. As is evident, it is not absurd to see in the lyrical flowering of the twelfth century, highly socialised and ritualised
— for the *cansos,* in their formal diversity, tirelessly repeat the same themes — the creation of a kind of profane mysticism. Which does not mean, nor imply, that it is essentially Cathar.

I have already shown, in **L'Erotique des Troubadours*,* that the intention of these poets had always been to 'purify' Love of everything it is not, by its very nature, and not, as Platonism, for example, claims, to sever it completely from sexuality. From this perspective, and in keeping with the unconscious sentiment of their age, it is true that they frequently regarded conjugal love as
'venal' and utilitarian, and that they placed — implicitly — true love beyond marriage. They certainly believed that any union based on self-interest and the forced submission of the wife to her husband was incompatible with genuine affection, which, consequently, could only develop through adultery (moral, in principle, but more or less carnal, in fact). To the extent

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[7] Napoleon Peyrat, a writer of the second half of the 19th century, author of the poem **Roland** and, above all, of **Histoire des Albigeois*.*

Insofar as the Cathars accepted marriage—we know they did not forbid it to ordinary believers—it is likely, judging by certain examples provided by *Bishop Fournier's Inquisition Register* (14th century), that they held a view very similar to that foreshadowed by the eroticism of the troubadours, that is to say, more benevolent towards the wife and more favourable to gender equality. On the other hand, insofar as the Good Men, who rejected it entirely for themselves, tolerated it among the faithful only as a lesser evil, they did in fact discredit it, but for reasons different from those of the troubadours: they professed that carnal intercourse, whether within or outside marriage — although, in certain cases, it might form part of the divine plan (ensuring, for example, the reincarnations necessary for the purification of souls) — was of a satanic nature. Cathars and troubadours agreed on this point only incidentally, and never dogmatically.

The admiration for feminine beauty and the glorification of *Fin'Amors* that they inspired, particularly among the troubadours of the 1150s—a type of woman so idealised that some modern critics have deemed it comparable to a representation of the Blessed Virgin—is not enough to imbue the 'songs' with mysticism or Platonism. The more obscure ones place an exaggerated emphasis on Love, but they do not for that reason become 'esoteric'; or, if they contain any esotericism, it corresponds solely to the mystery of human love. For the troubadours, the woman never symbolises the Virgin Mary, nor wisdom, nor gnosis, nor the Cathar Church: she refers us solely to her own image, transfigured and, moreover, always ready to return to earthly realities. When we think of Cathar spirituality in relation to *the cansos,* we are, more or less unconsciously, attributing to the poetry of the troubadours characteristics that later belonged to the Italians of *the dolce stil nuovo,* whose art stems from that of the Provençals, but which quickly took a very different course. Thus, the esoteric concerns of the Italians seem to have been exaggerated by observers; nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that, in their poems, love is truly purer and more platonic; the beloved lady more readily conveys the impression that she symbolises a supernatural or balanced being, or quite simply the feminine essence consecrated by death. These women who die so young are worshipped as angels and, projected *posthumously* into the realm of ideas, are effectively supernatural as souls. Provençal lyric poetry celebrated only cheerful and playful châtelaines.

The emancipation of women

Certain constants of human nature have not changed with the times. The new social phenomenon is the fact that, for the first time, two doctrines — 'Love' and Catharism — sought to liberate women by neutralising the notion of carnal sin. Love is not a sin, but a virtue, said the troubadours.

It is always a sin, Catharism maintained, except for simple believers.

Women take advantage of this dual teaching to claim the right to love as they please. 'Any lady, even the most virtuous, may love, if

love.' And from there, they see love understood in this way as a means of asserting their independence in the face of male 'potestas'. They play at free love 'to do as men do' and to take pleasant revenge on some for the tyranny of others.

The records of the Inquisition reveal women who were far from 'virtuous' yet resolute; having endured the brutality and vulgarity of men, they acted solely in accordance with their own interests and fantasies. Beatriz de Planissoles cannot resist the men who take her fancy. Another young woman, Grazida, deflowered by her village priest at the age of thirteen and married to an honest young man named Pierre Lizier, has not the faintest idea what a sin of love is. Her words echo those of the Countess of Die, just as much as the thoughts of a shepherdess correspond to those of a woman of letters.

'By giving yourself to a priest before marriage,' asks the Inquisitor, 'and later, after you were already married, do you consider that you have sinned?' 'As it pleased both me and the priest at the time,' she replied, 'I did not think—and still do not think
— that it is a sin. But now, as that is not my desire, if I were to have sexual relations with him, I believe it would be a sin... Although the carnal union of man and woman displeases God, I do not think they commit a sin if it is pleasurable for both of them."

For women in the 13th century, licentiousness, like asceticism but in the opposite sense, inevitably constituted an unconscious protest against the social order that oppressed them and, above all, against unequal marriage, dominated by men. If they wished to assert their autonomy, their only choice was between the path opened up by the troubadours—the total celebration of freedom in love, linked to the idea that love is not a sin—and the path advised by the 'Men of Goodness': asceticism and perfection.

The troubadours of the 'Albigensian' period

Whilst Occitan society remained untouched by war and persecution, the troubadours concerned themselves solely with love and courtly chivalry. They only began to take notice of religious issues when the events following the crusade ruined the small courts they had enlivened and scattered their audience (they then became town dwellers). Raimon de Miraval, whose family were Cathars, continues to sing of his ladies, even amidst the storm. When he realises the extent of the disaster, he clings to the hope that the Count of Toulouse will hand over his castle to him and that, with victory, 'the time will come when ladies and lovers may recover "*le* joi" lost'! It is true that, at times, desires for revenge animate them, but when they show themselves to be combative — like Bernart de Rouvenac, for example — it is rarely in the name of purely religious ideals. Even in the case of strict moralists such as Peire Cardenal and Montanhagol, who express in their poems sentiments of charity and humanity that far transcend time and circumstance, we are surprised to see that their despair and pessimism are intertwined with a sense of loss at the passing of an era in which luxury and extravagance

For the great lords, the rituals of courtly love formed the objective foundations of the aristocratic society that had granted them—and the minstrels—such a privileged position.

All that we have just said means that the interests of the troubadours were linked, sociologically speaking, to those of the southern nobility; and that they were only tempted, with rare exceptions, to defend Catharism when the nobility had, directly or indirectly, taken their side. It was, therefore, due to the force of events that the last troubadours—almost all of them, perhaps, for there were not many left after 1250—alongside Peire de Cardenal and Montanhagol[8] , found themselves in the camp of the adversaries of the Church and the French, condemned to share the fate of their lords who had been dispossessed or threatened with dispossession, and without whose protection they would have no right to any social existence; for, as I have already said, neither the troubadours nor the minstrels, few in number and relatively isolated, ever came to form an independent class. And, as is evident, neither Love as a courtly system, nor the poets, as its established servants, had the opportunity to intervene in these ideological and political conflicts that pitted Rome against Catharism and the lords of the North against the lords of the South.

Moral Catharism

However, on rereading the poems of the last troubadours—those relating to the so-called 'Albigensian' period—we believe we can discern, beyond the traces of moral and political satire, ideas that bear the unmistakable mark of Cathar thought, a result of the fact that persecution brought about contact, at the court of Toulouse, for example, between the poets and the 'resistance fighters', the worldly and their deeds, within the very same clandestine circles. A Peire Cardenal, a Montanhagol, though not believers, lived, in Toulouse as in other regions, in a reformist, or even revolutionary, atmosphere of heresy. Peire Cardenal was widely read by the Cathars; in the time of Bishop Fournier, a believer from the county of Foix was still able to recite from memory the first stanza of Cardenal's terrible satire against the clergy ('The clergy pose as lambs but are murderers'). This dissemination of his work can only be explained by the fact that, at least during the first part of his life, he was officially a Cathar or could not shake off that reputation. He was considered a 'friend of heresy', a 'friend of God'. The force of events would compel him to adopt and use the common phrases of heresy, the prayers he frequently heard quoted and recited in the circles in which he moved and, most likely, at the very court of Raymond VI[9] . It is no coincidence that in one of his poems *(Au nom du Seigneur Droit),* in which he invokes the true God, line 43 (Grant me the power to love what you love!) curiously confirms — as [Ms]Lucie Varga very judiciously observed — the words so

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[8] Montanhagol, a great satirical and anticlerical poet who spent many years at the court of Alfonso X of Castile (1229–1258).

[9] Alongside his struggles and his countless activities, Raymond VI was one of the greatest patrons of the arts of his time.

characteristics of the well-known prayer: ‘Make me love what you love’. These stereotypical formulas, often very beautiful, could, moreover, impress the troubadour solely for their poetic value, for his doctrine lacks any unity: the most orthodox principles flank statements which, in other circumstances, would have led to the stake. What interests him is moral rigour; that was essentially his ‘heresy’. As Ms Lucie Varga says,
‘When we hear talk of austere morality, we can be sure we are treading on heretical ground.’ In truth, he aims to be a free-thinking moralist. His anti-clericalism draws on heretical ideas only when he wishes to lend greater force to his satire. As for the rest, he is a good Christian. It is true that he perhaps considered himself an even better Christian when he adopted certain dogmatic dualist views. The astonishing *sirventes* addressed to God
— one of the boldest of the Middle Ages — is undoubtedly heretical from beginning to end: ‘Send me back, Lord, to whence I came, or forgive me my sins, for I would not have committed them had I not been born!’ ‘God commits a wrong against his own when he sets out to destroy or condemn them.’ These final verses are intended to absolve man of all responsibility, in accordance with the theory which, at roughly the same time, was defended by Jean de Lugio in *The Book of the Two Principles.*

We must conclude that, by the end of the 13th century, under the influence of Catharism, many good souls openly professed that the true God, the God of Goodness, could not condemn sinners: He was capable only of saving His creatures. And this for two reasons: on the one hand, there is no Evil in God, and ‘Justice’ (vengeance) would, as such, be an evil. On the other hand, man does not sin of his own free will. It is the Devil who provokes evil within him. Consequently, it is the Devil who must be destroyed. These two ideas naturally led to the belief that hell is on earth, where the creature is subject to the Devil, and not in some other place. ‘If I suffer here on earth,’ says Peire Cardenal, ‘and if I were to suffer in hell as well, that would, in my opinion, be a mistake and a sin!’

We see, then, that by the end of the 13th century, and particularly in Toulouse, among the more educated circles, a kind of diffuse Catharism was spreading, focused essentially on morality, which won over to its cause many Catholic and anti-clerical reformers. Of the heresy, only two or three major principles remain, which I have already mentioned: ‘God cannot do evil; man does not possess free will. He necessarily does evil and, necessarily, good as well, after purifying himself of matter.’ The true heresy was, then, the affirmation of Necessity. The troubadour Montanhagol thinks exactly like Peire Cardenal: ‘The wicked,’ he asserts, ‘do not commit a fault when they do evil, because it is a necessity for them, just as it is for the good to do good’.

Catharism was becoming simpler and, at the same time, broader and deeper. Whilst among the rural population, in Languedoc and the county of Foix, it was rapidly evolving into a banal materialism, it is likely that in Toulouse, around 1250, in aristocratic circles, there were many young lords who were more Epicureans than Christians, and perhaps secretly atheists,

for whom Catharism was nothing more than Averroism in disguise, even if they did not think of it in entirely conscious terms. This moral phenomenon occurred in Florence at roughly the same time as the emergence of ‘amorous’, poetic and philosophical syncretism.

ND PHILOSOPHICAL ESOTERISM

Cathar philosophy varied somewhat across space and time. The theories of the Italian Jean de Lugio (1240) are not exactly identical to those of the Occitan Bartholomew (1220). We know that Jean de Lugio was reputed to have introduced innovations in certain aspects of traditional absolute dualism. The declining Catharism of the late 13th and early 14th centuries — that of the last Perfects of the county of Foix — diverged considerably from the Catharism professed in Languedoc on the eve of the Albigensian Crusade. Finally, as regards the very essence of dualism, we have already seen that the heretics were divided into two major tendencies: some, monists, like the Catholics after all, believed that Evil had a beginning; others asserted that it was a Principle without beginning or end: there were absolute dualists and moderate dualists.

I make no secret of the fact that these variations and differences have, at times, been greatly exaggerated. Some heresiologists display a somewhat limited sense of historical perspective when they decree, often without decisive grounds, that a doctrine established in 1220 must, *a priori*, be very different from one dating from 1240, as if, in this twenty-year interval — separating Bartholomew from Jean de Lugio, for example — metaphysical ideas could have evolved so much. As for geographical distances, these do not seem to have separated the various dualist schools as radically as is claimed. It is currently fashionable to attribute more differences between Bartholomew's *Cathar Treatise*[1]and Jean de Lugio's *Book of the Two Principles* than actually exist: indeed, given their rather rigid structure, it is not possible for the various dualist systems to deviate greatly from the ideal formula and, consequently, from one another.

In truth, it is above all the agreement between the only two Cathar treatises we possess, on all the important points of doctrine, that should strike us: Bartholomew and Jean de Lugio think in exactly the same way about the notion of creation. Creation, for them, takes place from pre-existing matter or from the very substance of the Creators, and not from nothing; it is always *creatio ex essentia Dei* — or *Diaboli* —, and never *creatio ex nihilo.* Both contrast, and in roughly the same terms, evil Nature and good Nature, the former being visible, transitory, vain and corruptible, and the latter invisible, eternal and incorruptible.

Finally, we find the same similarity of views regarding the problem of free will. To demonstrate that free will does not exist — or that it is fallacious —, Jean de Lugio employs very clever arguments that were not refined after him. Bartholomew does not refer to him (or perhaps the part of his work concerning this subject has not been

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[1] This *Cathar treatise* has come down to us via Durand of Huesca's **Liber contra Manicheos**, published and annotated by Ch. Thouzelier (Leuven, 1964).

preserved), but as the heretics of the county of Foix, at the end of the 13th century, used; to reject it, the very arguments that Jean de Lugio had constructed (a certain Bernard Franca, for example, repeats them word for word) and which had long been circulating in Languedoc, we must necessarily conclude that the last Cathars had read Jean de Lugio — which is unlikely — or that they had read Bartholomew's complete treatise or another of the same kind; and, in any case, that these Languedoc scholars held the same view as Jean de Lugio on free will, namely that it is deceptive.

It is all these points of agreement that enable us to speak in all sincerity of a Cathar 'philosophy' reflecting the fundamental requirements of any coherent dualist system. Jean de Lugio undoubtedly expressed these more rigorously than Bartholomew, who confines himself to citing scriptural authorities to support his thesis. Alongside Bartholomew's treatise—of which, incidentally, we retain only a few fragments—the *Book of the Two Principles*—or rather the collection of short summaries so named, since Jean de Lugio's work has been lost—is the sole testimony we possess of Cathar thought. However, we may accept the highly probable hypothesis that there were many other dogmatic writings intended for pastors and even for ordinary believers.

It is quite possible that in Languedoc, up until 1240–1244, and in Italy until the early 14th century, Catharism never suffered from a shortage of sufficiently educated Perfects to ensure a certain intellectual coherence within the doctrine. The theories which Bernard Franca, a cleric from Goulier, declared in 1320 before Bishop Fournier[2] to have adopted some years earlier, were firmly rooted and were not tainted by the then much-degraded folklore of heresy. And these ideas had not suddenly emerged in 1300: they had always prevailed in educated circles and among the clergy. It was rightly observed—and Moneta of Cremona was the first to do so—that the Cathars underpinned their arguments with Aristotelian-style formulations. Statements such as: 'Opposite things, opposite principles' — more or less understood and assimilated; and, moreover, not particularly complicated — led directly to dualism and, above all, to the logical consequences that were easily applied to earthly phenomena: 'The visible world is changeable and corruptible; *therefore,* it cannot have as its creator an eternal and incorruptible God'. Were the Cathars of the county of Foix disciples of Aristotle without knowing it? Were they repeating, in simplified form, the teachings of certain clerics influenced by Aristotle or who knew him through the various treatises attributed to him in the Middle Ages? The matter remains unclear. But what is certain is that many heretics were incapable of rediscovering the basic elements of a rational philosophy.

Aristotle's influence is particularly evident in Jean de Lugio: it appears in all the somewhat profound developments of *The Book of the Two Principles,* especially those concerning free will, where the philosopher's principles are employed more intelligently and effectively. Here follows one of Jean de Lugio's arguments against free will: 'It seems impossible in the eyes

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[2] Bishop Fournier was, between 1318 and 1325, one of the most rigorous inquisitors of the time.

'that no one can possess the power of the two opposites simultaneously' (that is to say: that one can always do good and always do evil). Aristotle's corresponding proposition is as follows, as it appears, in roughly the same terms, in *the Metaphysics* (theta, 5): 'Thus, a power cannot simultaneously produce, even if we desire or wish it, two contrary effects—or effects—... There is no power that produces them simultaneously'.

In other words, there is no choice, for the same cause — intention or *situation* — cannot generate contrary effects or actions: we always have the illusion of choosing.

Malignant nature

Moderate dualists and absolute dualists believed that the material, visible world had been created by an imperfect being. In this respect, they diverged significantly from the orthodox view that it was a single, good God who created everything. Above all, the absolute dualists taught that the Devil had been the sole creator of matter and bodies, and not, as the moderate dualists maintained, merely the organiser of the cosmos and, in a sense, God's collaborator. Certainly, in more recent times and under the influence of Catholicism and moderate dualism, the Catharism popular tempered a little the its
'absolutism'; he made two concessions: do good and evil things not exist here on Earth, as the common folk used to say? Is not the very presence of the soul and of good men on this earth a blessing? Was it truly the Devil who caused useful and innocent plants to flourish and sprout? It must be acknowledged that the theory which turned this earth into a 'hell' faced countless practical objections, especially insofar as the absolute dualists had forgotten that this world was, in truth, as Mani[3]had demonstrated, a mixture of contrary effects. Likewise, it was not so much in these visible effects, in these contradictory occurrences, that the material world was considered evil, but in its very essence. Diabolical creation is a false creation; it is vain (that is, without authentic foundations), transitory (subject to ceaseless transformations), corruptible (that is, tending towards nothingness). A single sentence by Bartholomew sums up its characteristics: 'The creatures we can see in this world,' he tells us, 'are evil, false, corruptible, and, just as they came from nothing, they will return to nothing' *(Et prorsus sicut de nihilo veniunt, in nihilum revertur).* For Jean de Lugio, the evil creation exhibits the same ontological imperfection: it contains only 'evil, false, transitory things' (*mala, vana et transitoria*): it is not grounded in Being; being visible, it possesses reality only for the material senses created by the Devil. It has nothing in common with that which Bartholomew and Jean de Lugio set against it, the celestial and invisible world, where only eternal and incorruptible entities dwell.

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[3] Mani, or Manes, born in *Persia*, the founder of the dualist doctrine, attributed creation to two principles: one essentially good, which is God, and the other essentially evil, which is the Devil (the doctrine of the two principles).

John 1:4

As the absolute dualists held the Gospel of St John in particularly high regard, it was necessary for them to see—or to introduce—a dualist meaning into it. Verse 1:4 reads: *'All that was made was in Him (Jesus Christ)* (...) *and the Life was the light of men.*' This establishes that everything that exists was made in Jesus Christ and, consequently, that nothing was made by the Devil; and that, therefore, there is a single creator. The Cathars understood the verse differently, altering the punctuation: 'Everything that had been made in Him — was Life'. Which meant: '(Only) what had been made in Him was Life', thus implying that other things had been made by the Devil (and that they were not Life, but Death). The current Catholic translation is very clear and, naturally, absolutely non-dualistic: 'He was the life of all being'. The Cathars' version was also very clear, in its own way, and, naturally, dualistic to the extreme: *Co qu'es fait en Lui — was life* (Only what had been made in Him was life).

The Principle of Evil

But what is this principle of Evil? It does not coincide entirely with matter, and this is one of the points on which Catharism differs from ancient Manichaeism. Nevertheless, the Devil and matter retain an intimate relationship. Either matter created the Devil (as in ancient Manichaeism, where he sometimes appears as a kind of false spirit brought forth by the blind interplay of the elements), or the Devil created matter, which is, in any case, inseparable from him. As for the absolute dualists, there seem to have been two divergent tendencies regarding the eternity of matter. Some, perhaps influenced by Catholicism (or by moderate dualism), maintained that the world would have an end; others, that it was eternal. I believe that the true and fundamental doctrine is that which posits its eternity: *Quod mundus semper fiut et semper erit* (That the world has always existed and always will exist). This was based on the fact that each creator draws his creation from his own substance and that they are, consequently, co-eternal. According to Moneta, the absolute dualist Tetricus, whose works he had read, taught that souls existed for all eternity and were *coaevae Dei,* 'of the same age as God'. Was the same true of entities or things created by the Devil? Certainly, for Raynier Sacconi tells us, for his part, in his *Summa de Catharis,* that creatures, in Jean de Lugio's system, are to their creator 'as rays are to the Sun'.

There is, therefore, some possibility that the theories shared by Tetricus and Jean de Lugio were adopted by the vast majority of absolute dualists. It is these, in any case, that show the most points of agreement with the theories of creation found in both Bartholomew (1220) and Jean de Lugio (1240), and which fit best with the internal structure of dualism. We can, moreover, easily reconcile the views of those who believe in the end of the world with those who do not. Some dualists certainly conceived of the end of the world as a dissolution of this universe, in which the antagonistic creations of the two principles of Good and Evil are intimately linked. From this perspective, the souls

Once freed, they would settle in a sort of heavenly Jerusalem, incorruptible and luminous. But hell remains the demon's natural *habitat*. We have already noted that, for certain Cathars, it is the earth itself which, after the departure of pure souls, will be transformed into hell and a refuge for eternally damned entities. In both cases, Catharism attributes eternal duration to matter, and to Satan, its creator. In this way, the Cathar Devil approaches Manichaeism: without identifying completely with matter, Satan is forever bound to it.

However, he is often conceived as a *spirit*—and above all, it is true, in myths—as a sort of angel reminiscent of the Lucifer of Catholicism and moderate dualism (to which he was undoubtedly drawn). But he also inherited the lack of authority to which moderate dualism had reduced the second Son of God, Lucifer, once good and now turned evil. And, once again, it is impossible not to think of the abandoned archangel of Christianity and of Saint Augustine.

Just as there are all manner of intermediate stages in Christian orthodoxy between the rebellious angel and the beast, so too did many heterodox conceptions emerge, aimed at narrowing the gap between absolute dualism and so-called moderate dualism. The two tendencies reacted against one another. The notion of a rebellious archangel transformed the principle into a kind of spirit; but the absolutist problem, according to which 'no being can change, become evil, without having suffered the effect of a cause', equally influenced the moderate dualists who realised that the invention of freedom is not enough to explain the emergence of evil, unless a cause intended to influence choice is already present. 'Evil,' says Jean de Lugio, 'could never have arisen spontaneously from the creature of the good God, considered as such, had there not been an external cause.' Thus, the moderate dualists of Concorezzo added an esoteric aspect (esoteric because they themselves called it 'secret') to their esoteric belief regarding the spontaneous corruption of the rebellious angel. They secretly maintained that Lucifer, created good, had become evil under the influence of a true principle of Evil, which they represented, in their myths, in the form of a chaotic monster—chaos constituting the medium, and indeed the natural state, of the evil principle—with four faces: that of a man, that of a bird, that of a fish, and that of an animal. Naturally, this text—though essential—is always disregarded, yet it allows us to bridge the differences between absolute and moderate dualists and, above all, to better grasp the nature of the evil principle. In my opinion, this monster is the only image the Cathars have bequeathed to us of the evil principle. It is paradoxical that it should appear in a text emanating from 'moderate dualism'! It is a principle: it never had a beginning. It is an 'evil' spirit or one of bad quality (*nequam*), a spirit bound to the chaos in which it dwells, and having no power to create *(Et mcnebat in hoc Chaos, nidlam habens potestatem creandi).* It would be difficult to consider this evil principle equal in power to the true God... It possesses only the power to seduce or corrupt Lucifer, who is still good, but predestined not to remain so for long. It can only operate in the existential order with the help of an essence created by the good God.

It was under these material guises that the absolute dualists portrayed the true principle of Evil.

Some, such as those of the school of Jean de Lugio, for example, wishing to express themselves in a more philosophical manner, went so far as to unpack the evil principle in such a way as to regard devils and 'gods' as mere emanations of the Root of Evil, and to situate it in an infinitely distant and unrecognisable beyond. Jean de Lugio asserts that Satan is a being 'derived' from the evil principle, which is, in itself, something different. 'No one in this world,' he adds, 'can show us this evil god in a visible or temporal manner — nor, for that matter, the God of Good.' But by the effects we know the cause. In this case, the effect is the same as the principle, which seems to be, for Jean de Lugio, merely an abstract idea of universal corruption. This way of unfolding the evil principle into a 'cause-figure' and
The concept of the 'character-effect' is highlighted by Raynier Sacconi in Jean de Lugio's **Book of the Two Principles** (of which we possess only a summary). In the section of his *Suma de Catharis* where he conveys Jean de Lugio's views (*De opinionibus Johannis de Lugio*), he tells us that, for Jean de Lugio, the world was the work of the Devil, or rather, 'the father of the Devil'. Whilst Jean de Lugio was able to give this idea a fairly rigorous philosophical expression, in the summary we have of his book, it was not an invention of his own. This clearly shows that, on this point too, he introduced few innovations, confining himself, for the most part, to rationalising traditional conceptions.

Absolute dualists have always made a distinction between the Devil and the 'father of the Devil'. As stated in *the Latin Cathar Ritual:* 'We thought we ought to say: Our Father who art in heaven, to distinguish him from the father of the Devil, who is evil and the father of the wicked'. It is the *Gospel* of St John that forms the basis of this belief: 'The devil, when he lies, speaks of his own things (or causes?), from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies' (8:44). The Occitan translation: *'The demon, when he speaks lies, speaks of his own causes, for the liar is his father',* is, I admit, as ambiguous as the Latin text and the Greek text (*Oti, pseustes estin Kai o pater autou*). Already in *the Acts of Archelaus* translated by Mani one could read: 'Since he does not possess the truth, whenever he lies, he speaks of himself, for he is a liar, just like his father'. It is true that the Cathars of Dragovitsa,[4] whose Church, according to tradition, had been founded directly by Mani, knew, from *the Gospel* of St John interpreted in this way, that Lucifer was the son of the god of darkness, that is, his emanation or manifestation: *Et dicunt quod Lucifer filius dei tenebrarum est, quia dicitur Evangelio Johannis: vox ex patre diaboli estis...,* etc. *And his father, that is, the Devil, is the root of Lucifer.* It is likely that most absolute dualists, at least after the arrival in France of Nicetas, whose theories resembled those of the heretics of Dragovitsa, interpreted the passage in question from *the Gospel* of St John in the same way as Mani. They believed in the existence of a root of Evil, hidden and unrecognisable, from which all evils — including Satan himself — are derived (*to which,* says Jean de Lugio, *the power of Satan and of darkness... are derived*).

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[4] A name given to the Bulgarian Church which professed absolute dualism.

We truly have the impression that, for moderate dualists, the Devil's father could well correspond to the monster of chaos of which we spoke,[5] and the son to the rebellious angel corrupted by him. Moderate dualism would have been a timid — or secret — form of dualism, concealing, out of prudence (?), the true problem of the origin of evil.

It is therefore worth revisiting current theories to some extent and acknowledging that a whole faction of moderate dualists believed—in the depths of their thoughts—just as the absolute dualists did: that there was an eternal root of Evil, but that they concealed this belief as a mystery: *'Arcanum est',* they said; that, for the absolute dualists, what they called the evil principle was, in itself, unrecognisable and that all evils — and Satan and his demons — merely manifested its effects; that, on this point and on many others, there is a certain agreement between St Augustine and the Cathars. St Augustine, commenting on the *Gospel* of St John, declares that darkness, error and death are not found in the Word. And Jean de Lugio: 'That darkness, therefore, is not with him (…). For darkness was not created either directly or principally by Our Lord, the true God and his Son, Jesus Christ'.

For the same reasons, it is absolutely impossible to maintain, as some heresiologists still stubbornly do, that the two principles of Catharism are equal. This term does not have a very precise meaning ('equal' means: similar, identical) and, moreover, if we do not specify in what respect they are equal, it is clear that they are not equal either in value or in power, nor even
'equivalent'. For Jean de Lugio, eternal Evil is 'sin, punishment, anguish, error, fire and torment, subjection and Satan'. And it had no beginning and will have no end. Forty years earlier, the Cathar Bartholomew regarded every visible manifestation, and the Devil himself too, as an illusory phantasmagoria unfolding between two nothingnesses. On the other hand, he insists that the God of Good is the only *summus ac verus et omnipotens* (supreme, true and almighty), whilst the false God is none of these things. And, for Jean de Lugio, the Devil is merely 'lie, error, false power (not true) and impotence to act beyond the plane of Evil, which is not true'.

How could the Cathars regard error and truth, true power and false power, the fullness of being and the annihilated being, Good and Evil, Being and Nothingness as equal in value and ontological intensity? If, instead of using the language of the Inquisitors, historians were to agree—which would reveal a modicum of accuracy—to respect the vocabulary of the heretics they study, as they do when conveying the beliefs of the Dogon or the Bantu; if they were to call the good principle the True God, in the manner of the Cathars, perhaps they would find it more natural not to designate the other, the 'false' one, as its equal. If they were to think clearly that making the two principles equal means admitting the existence of two supreme beings, which would therefore cease to be opposites and contradictory, perhaps they would avoid—as the disputants have always done

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(5) We may contrast this idea with the romantic view of the 'intelligent and seductive' devil.

Medieval Catholics, despite being deeply hostile to Cathar dualism, attributed such nonsense to the heretics, since no text authorises them to do so and, on the contrary, all writings of Cathar origin proclaim the ontological weakness and creative impotence of the Evil One, and declare his final defeat to be inevitable when the Final Moment arrives.

CATHARISM DIED BUT ITS SPIRIT LIVES ON

It is always possible—and no one seems to refrain from doing so—to reduce Catharism to the scale of a minor Christian heresy, to confine it historically to the brief years of its existence and, above all, to regard its history as having long since come to an end. This viewpoint is perfectly defensible. But it is also not forbidden to place it within the much broader dualistic complex that is its own, from which it arose and which legitimately encompasses Manichaeism and Bogomilism, and to add to it the numerous ideological offshoots it has given rise to. Whenever we see a dogmatic opposition to Roman Catholicism and its methods—which often consisted of subjugating souls by torturing bodies—manifest itself, provided this opposition is based on the belief that there exists in the world an eternal and irreducible root of Evil, we feel perfectly entitled to speak of Catharism or, at the very least, of Manichaeism—as, indeed, the inquisitors frequently did — whatever the direct historical origin of the doctrine in question: ancient Manichaeism, Bogomilism, Western Catharism.

THE SPIRITUAL ADVENTURE OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY AT THE BEGINNING OF THE NINTH CENTURY

The Ghibellines

Whilst spreading throughout the Languedoc, Catharism took firm root in numerous regions of Italy, where it was suppressed just as ruthlessly as elsewhere. The first persecutions of the Cathars in Tuscany took place in Prato in 1223. In Florence, the Inquisition began operating in 1243 under the direction of Fra Ruggiero dei Calcagani; the following year, repression was carried out in Poppi and Prato, where women and nobles were burned at the stake. After the defeat of the Florentine Patarines in 1244, the Inquisition employed above all the weapons of denunciation, confiscation of property and exile; and, by the beginning of the 14th century, active Catharism was nothing more than a historical memory.

But in Florence, heresy seems to have taken on a distinctive character from very early on and to have survived for a long time, intermingling with philosophical doctrines of very diverse origins. Heresy became syncretic. The Ghibellines — enemies of the Pope and supporters of the Emperor[1] — were not Cathars in the strict sense, but had been influenced by the Occitan dualists

[1] This was the era of the Avignon Papacy. The Ghibelline Cola di Rienzi reigned in Rome, from where he had expelled the papal authority. Rienzi almost altered the course of French history by sending a false John I—who appears to have been switched at birth—to the south. Rienzi's assassination may well have saved the Capetian dynasty.

refugees in Italy and the troubadours hostile to the Church, whom Frederick II had welcomed into his court. And these Occitans — I am thinking, for example, of Guilhem Figueira — sometimes considered themselves, by extension, even more Ghibelline than the Cathars.

It is difficult to know exactly what these Florentine nobles were thinking; perhaps they were Epicureans by nature, yet curious about all new doctrines—or those revived from antiquity—provided they were anti-Catholic. They were passionate about Platonism, but also and above all about Averroism, and we may entertain the hypothesis that, being reluctant to unify their conceptions, they saw in the new Latin Averroism championed by Siger of Brabant a kind of more evolved and more philosophical Catharism. The similarities between the two 'heresies' on all essential points are striking. The Cathars considered the human spirit to be sinless, incorruptible and dwelling in God; Siger of Brabant's theory held that the intellect is identical in all men. The later Cathars sometimes thought that the material soul died with the body; Siger also believed that it was destroyed with the blood. The Averroist idea that divine providence does not operate on earth could perfectly well be reconciled with the dominion exercised over it by the prince of darkness. Finally, the denial of free will, the necessity of events, and the eternity of the world were taught in the same way by both the Averroists and the Cathars.

There are undeniable traces of Averroism in the poems of Guido Cavalcanti — who may have been a Cathar — and, above all, in the curious poem by *Fiore* attributed to Dante.

Naturally, we must first and foremost view this kind of philosophical syncretism as a phenomenon that can be explained primarily by social and political circumstances. The Ghibellines tended to adopt all the propositions that the Roman Church classified as heretical. The poem **Il Fiore** is quite revealing in this regard. Written certainly at the end of the 13th century
— and perhaps by Dante, representing, in this case, a work of his youth —, it consists of 232 sonnets that resemble an imitation, or a translation, of *the Romance of the Rose,* which it closely follows. But when we examine it closely, we realise that it is very different, not only in its general spirit, but also in the direction of certain allusions. The character
'Deceiver' frequently represents religious hypocrisy and the Inquisition. All the sympathies of the Ghibelline poet undoubtedly lie with the victims of the Inquisition: the Patarines, the 'lovers', Siger of Brabant—in short, all those who took a stand against Rome or were condemned by it. In Sonnet 136, the character 'Deceiver' reveals himself as a foolish and cruel inquisitor: 'I shall prove to the Patarines, he tells us, that they are heretics, and I shall make them feel the intense heat of the pyres! At the very least, I shall have them 'imprisoned' and subject them to penances so harsh that they would have been better off never having been born. In Prato, in Arezzo, in Florence, I have destroyed and exiled many. A curse upon those who fall under my sentences'!

A certain Brother Elias, superior of the Franciscan order, had been dismissed by the Pope. He may have been somewhat of a Ghibelline, for it is said he had joined Frederick II and rode at his side during the sieges of Faenza and Ravenna. He had been replaced as head of his order by Brother Alberto. The author of *Fiore* naturally favours Elias over this Brother Alberto, against whom the country folk had likewise taken sides. In sonnet 88, Brother Alberto (d'Agimoro) embodies hypocrisy and vice: 'I hide myself beneath these robes,' says the poet, 'beneath these robes of which no one ought to be ashamed'!

As for Siger of Brabant, whom Dante placed in Paradise amongst the saints representing theology, the author of **Il Fiore** laments his fate: 'They killed him in great agony', in the territory subject to the jurisdiction of Rome, in Orvieto. We know that Siger of Brabant had taken an active part in the famous dispute between the followers of St Dominic and those who studied logic, and was hated by the Dominican Inquisition, which favoured logic alone. Thus, we do not see in *Il Fiore* Averroism, an anti-Roman spirit, anticlericalism, or a profound Epicureanism combined under the pretext of exalting 'Love'—that of *the Romance of the Rose.* From there to the idea that, for the Ghibellines, Love served to designate something more than this passion, is a step readily taken by reckless scholars.

Love and its faithful

In his book published in London in 1832, with the rather lengthy title: *On the Anti-Papal Spirit that Produced the Reformation, and the Secret Influence it Exercised on All the Literature of Europe and Particularly of Italy*, Gabriel Rossetti put forward, first and foremost, the hypothesis that the vocabulary of Dante and the lovers constituted a secret language designating the emperor and the universal monarchy by imaginary female names: Beatrice, Laura, Fiametta; and the Pope and the corrupt world that obeyed him, by the vile terms of she-wolf, Guelph (meaning 'wolf'), prostitute, etc. Pure women — the opposite of prostitutes — refer specifically to imperial power, the monarchy surrounded by all virtues and all advantages.

This hypothesis is not, in itself, absurd. The English historian Matthieu Paris recounts that a defector from the Cathar sect, a certain Yvon de Narbonne, is said to have written to the Archbishop of Bordeaux in 1243, stating that 'having gone to Italy, to Cosimo, he had been received amicably and with great generosity by fellow sectarians, to whom he had introduced himself; that he had learnt, through them, many things concerning the affairs of the sect, and, in particular, about the selection it made, in Tuscany and Lombardy, of intelligent pupils whom it then sent to Paris, at its own expense, to learn the art of utilising the subtleties of logic and theology; that merchant sectarians roamed the fairs and markets with the aim of gaining proselytes for their school, and that, when he, Yvon, had left Cosme to pass through Milan, Cremona and Venice on his way to Vienna, he had always and everywhere been recognised by means of signs'. It is indeed likely that the Cathars used signs of recognition, in the manner of the Freemasons. But did these signs constitute a language, and, above all, a poetic language?

I find the preface to *the Commentary on the Song of Songs*[2]more convincing, in which Martin Luther seems to acknowledge that it was perfectly common among princes to use a secret language attributed to love. 'In truth,' he tells us, 'this is what kings and princes usually do when they compose love poems (*canunt amatoria carmina*) which the common citizen regards as addressed to a wife or a mistress, although, in reality, these princes are referring to the State and the government of their peoples.' (In this case, it could be Emperor Frederick II.)

I must confess, however, that—except in those rare instances where it does indeed seem to me that certain passages in Dante or certain poems by Guido Cavalcanti would make more sense if Gabriel Rossetti's hypothesis were true—I am not entirely convinced. It is possible, after all, that the Ghibelline Cavalcanti, lover of the Florentine Giovanna, personifying the Ghibelline sect, under the pretext of going on a pilgrimage to Compostela, stopped in Toulouse and saw the Albigensian sect represented by the Toulouse woman Mandetta, stiff with anger, bound by her persecutors, who, with a single glance, made herself understood and loved. I readily admit, more generally, that the anti-papal sect of the Patarines may have mingled, as Rossetti says, with those of the Ghibellines. But I am not certain that they voluntarily wished to conceal themselves, or at least to conceal themselves in this manner. At that time, many poets openly attacked the papacy, and in particular Petrarch (whose sonnets *'Fiamma dei Cielo' and 'Fontana di dolore'* constitute the most terrible satires—along with Guilhem Figueira's *sirventes*—ever launched against the popes) and the author of *the 'Fiore'!* These poets did not sign their works and were not obliged to publish them in hostile circles. I prefer to think that they had adopted a precise symbolism corresponding to their convictions and that they insisted categorically on including Love in their system as well. But, naturally, a heretical love, free like Epicurean love and, if not chaste like Platonic love, at least, like it, a generator of virtues (the love which, as Cavalcanti says, arises solely in men of worth); and, in any case, stemming from Nature and not from the God of Rome. As *Fiore* could demonstrate, the poem most explicit on this point, which does not confuse its
'god of love' with the goddess who personified him among the troubadours (except for some, in whose view he is 'masculine'); nor with Minne, who is also a 'queen' to the 'Minnesängers'. He is, as indeed in *the Romance of the Rose,* a sort of Ghibelline or Averroist Lucifer, whom good Catholics cannot serve (the *Romance of the Rose* does not go quite so far in its impiety):

> *Worship me, for I am your god,*
> *and reject any other belief*
> *and do not believe in Luke, nor in Matthew,*
> *nor in Mark, nor in John!*

Love is, in itself—and not as a secret sign of any heterodox belief—the expression of opposition to Rome *(love against Rome!).* It had not been condemned in Paris in 1270 by Bishop Tempier in connection with the treatise

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[2] Preface quoted by E.-J. Delécluze: *Dante Alighieri or Love Poetry*, vol. II, p. 577.

De amoribus by André, the Chaplain, together with Siger of Brabant's assertions on the identity of the intellects, the eternity of the world, etc.? Love, too, was a heresy, the most pleasant of all. It united all the anti-Roman heresies. It was natural that it should become their common denominator.

Catherine Saube, 1417: the persecutors of Calvinism

In Languedoc, the second half of the 14th century had witnessed the disappearance of Catharism. The last victims of the Inquisition in the county of Foix were essentially atheists, materialists or Averroists, and not dualists believing simultaneously in the relative power of matter in this world and in the omnipotent transcendence of God in the next. We are, moreover, poorly informed as to what these obscure martyrs truly believed. Here and there, pockets of heresy must have persisted, fuelling a kind of intellectual resistance. It was in these circles that Protestantism, two centuries later, recruited its first adherents.

The Calvinist Chassanion de Monistrol recalls, at the end of his *History of the Albigensians,* the story of the heretic Catherine Saube, who was burned at the stake in Montpellier in 1417. This young woman, who belonged to the convent of the cloistered nuns, one day declared 'the knowledge that God had granted her regarding certain matters of religion'. She had been born in Thou, in Lorraine, "but it is likely that it was in Montpellier," adds Chassanion de Monistrol, "that she had received this instruction, for a few days later the nuns were also burned, along with the convent". It is worth noting that the people of Montpellier murmured against these executions, either because the idea of tolerance had gained ground or because a certain reformist spirit had been preserved in the city. During a Mass of the Holy Spirit, Raymond Cabasse delivered a sermon on Catherine Saube, in which he insulted those who were outraged that she had been burned.

Among the propositions put forward by this heretic, some are clearly Cathar in nature: 'Since the election of the Pope is no longer determined by a miracle,' she said, 'there are no longer any true Popes, cardinals, bishops or priests; the Catholic Church consists solely of the assembly of men and women who live as apostles and would rather die than offend God; baptism administered by a bad priest is ineffective and does not lead to salvation; unworthy priests cannot consecrate the host either; and, moreover, we must not worship the host, whether consecrated or not, for it is not the body of Jesus Christ; it is not to the priest that we must confess, but to God, and it makes no difference whether we confess before an honest layman or a priest; husband and wife cannot have sexual relations without falling into sin; if they do not do penance, they will be condemned; after this life, purgatory does not exist. Purgatory is found on earth'.

Had Catherine Saube converted the nuns to her religion (Cathar or Waldensian?) or was the convent already, before her arrival, a centre of traditional and clandestine Catharism? We shall never know. Let us note, however, that not

The statements attributed to them do not explicitly concern dualism, but simply evangelical reformism. There is even a proposition—the one concerning children who die after baptism and who cannot be saved because they possess neither reason nor faith—which the Cathars would certainly have rejected, at least in this form: they simply taught that, to be valid, spiritual baptism must be administered to adults possessing reason and understanding...

In fact, it was because Catherine Saube did not profess dualism that Chassanion de Monistrol included her, quite rightly, among the persecutors of Calvinism. 'It was this holy seed,' he tells us (that of the persecutors), 'which took root in Languedoc and other neighbouring regions, which grew and flourished under the rays of the Sun of Justice, which God has widely spread in recent times.'

"Then, awakening from a deep sleep, almost all of them trembled with joy and bathed in this heavenly and salutary light, to set out on the path of peace, rejecting darkness and serving God according to the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

These 16th-century Calvinist writers were quite right to seek their forebears amongst the Cathars and the last heretics of the 15th century, and to link their Reformation to the anti-Roman sentiment which, without a shadow of a doubt, facilitated its spread in the counties formerly under the influence of the Perfecti. Antoine Duguin, who was the first to preach Calvinism in Carcassonne, called himself a 'Good Man' — thus imitating the Cathar ministers of the 13th century, although this term was no longer used in the sense of
'religious man' — certainly to benefit from the prestige they still enjoyed in towns and the countryside, and to re-establish the tradition. The descendants of those who had been burned or persecuted believed they were seeing in the Calvinist pastors the Good Men of times gone by.

It should be added, however, that it is not currently possible to attribute a direct doctrinal connection between the Calvinist Reformation and the Cathar Reformation. Calvinism has always opposed dualistic conceptions.

THE 17TH AND 18TH CENTURIES

A sect of 'Judaizing Manicheans'

The eighteenth century reacted vigorously against intolerance and fanaticism: there is not a single 'philosopher' who, at least once in their writings, has not spoken with some sympathy of the Cathars or the Waldensians. For them, the fight against fanaticism consisted primarily of systematically rehabilitating all those whom, in the past, popes and kings had unjustly condemned (the Templars, for example). To be honest, the Encyclopaedists knew very little about Catharism and were more interested in the Waldensians and the Protestants who

were still being persecuted. I do not believe they ever suspected the existence of the sect of which I am about to speak to you.

In 1723, a group of Judaizing Manichaeans began to attract attention in Montpellier. The Duke of Roquelaure, sent to Languedoc to suppress Calvinist activity, was informed that heretics, both men and women, were gathering at the home of a certain Anne Robert, widow of Jean Verchand. The police report provides more details about the furnishings and clothing of those present than about the doctrine. 'A book was discovered containing these words: "This is the register of those who, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, await the coming of the Messiah." The widow Verchand's son was found wearing a white damask suit, a gold belt hanging down to his feet, and a Jewish-style cap, heavily pleated and trimmed with coloured ribbons (...). The ceiling of the room was painted white and, in the centre, one could read, in large red letters: *'Hic est via veritatis'*. I myself was very pleased to find, in an antique shop, a small altar that belonged to a member of this sect: it depicts a Greco-Roman style temple on the pediment of which are depicted three pagan spirits, naked and winged. Inside the temple, one sees an Ark of the Covenant, guarded by two praying angels with halos, and upon which descends the dove of the Holy Spirit, carrying in its beak a sort of eight-petalled solar rosette. The lower motif consists of two cornucopias of abundance, between which one can make out the image of the Pelican reviving its young...

'The furnishings of the rooms where the meetings were held and the curious attire of the high priest suggest, writes Fernand Benoît[3] , from whom we quote this page, that this was some archaic sect more or less linked to the heresies of the Middle Ages which, as we know, persisted for a long time in the mountains of Languedoc, and which are akin to the Protestant religion...» To be honest, we do not know what led D. Melchior Macanas, who collected the first of these documents in **Memorias históricas, políticas y gubernativas de España y Francia*,* and, after him, Fernand Benoît, to attribute the label of *'Judaising Manicheans'* to these heretics? *Judaising,* perhaps, but *Manicheans*? It is possible that the Spanish scholar used this term in the very general sense of 'heretic', which was sometimes attributed to it in the Middle Ages. Among the main accusations figure, as always, the abominable debauchery, the meetings in darkness, the ritual sacrifice of a child at Easter; in short, everything that had been levelled at the Cathars and the Waldensians five centuries earlier. This is roughly the only connection we can discern, at first glance, between the Cathars and the Judaising Manichaeans,

However, 'a certain Marquis François de Chefdebien de Saint-Amand,' Robert Ambelain tells us, 'a member of most of the Masonic rites of his time and known in contemporary initiatory orders (1753–1814) by the *name of Franciscus eques a Capite Galeato,* recognised in this sect, to whom

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[3] F. Benoît: 'A Manichaean Sect in Montpellier in the 18th Century', in *Revue de folklore français,* 1938.

he calls the sect of the imitators, the multipliers, the successors and disciples of this chain of innovators, ever interrupted and ever reborn, and which constantly troubled the Roman Church under the names of Gnostics, Basilicians, Manicheans, Arians[4] , Cathars, Waldensians...' We may therefore strictly admit that the sect of the Multipliers — to which the small altar I discovered fitted perfectly (but were these Multipliers truly the same as our sectarians?) — had preserved certain Manichaean or Cathar rites.

The leading members of the sect—artisans and poor commoners—were sentenced to hanging, hard labour or life imprisonment.

Pierre Bayle and Manichaeism

After this foray into the realm of traditional Enlightenment thought, or that which was more or less inspired by medieval beliefs, let us return to philosophy.

The great Pierre Bayle[5], born in Carla (Ariège), was descended on his mother's side—Jeanne de Bruguières—from an ancient family of the County of Foix. He does not, however, seem to have taken much interest in the religion of his 13th-century ancestors, nor in the history of the old castle of Montségur, whose tragic ruins he had glimpsed from afar. Yet this did not prevent him from being a born heretic: a Calvinist, a rationalist, inclined towards 'deism'. Through rationalism, he was seduced by the subtleties of Manichaean argumentation. This led Abbot Sabatier, in 1774, to declare: 'We feel like laughing when we see him trying at all costs to restore existence and vigour to old errors, to false systems discredited for centuries'. Let the abbot laugh; he who never understood a thing about Pierre Bayle's thought and who, above all, could not forgive him for having written, referring to Catholic France under the reign of Louis XIV: 'Monks and priests constitute a gangrene that spreads constantly and expels from the depths of the soul every kind of natural equity, introducing in its place bad faith and cruelty (…). The triumphs of Catholics are more those of deism than of true faith (...). Those who possess no religion other than natural equity cannot help but say that God is essentially too good to be the author of something as pernicious as positive religions, but that spirits hostile to our tranquillity came by night, sowing discord in the fields of natural religion, by establishing certain particular cults intended to be an eternal seed of wars, carnage, injustices...'

Bayle was not a Manichaean. It was the very nature of his methodology that led him, through his intellect, to support the defenders of Manichaeism. Thanks to him—even though he had died in 1706—dualism reasserted itself in the

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[4] Arianism was one of the first major heresies to spread throughout the declining Roman Empire and, at one point, came close to undermining the spiritual authority of the papacy. Its founder was the priest Arius (256–336).

[5] Pierre Bayle was one of Descartes's principal disciples. He was born in 1647 and died in 1706. He was the author of a *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, which is cited by the Encyclopédistes.

the 18th century, to the reflection of honest people. 'The Manicheans,' he tells us — and therein lies the starting point of his purely operative dualism — 'with an absurd and utterly contradictory hypothesis, explain experience a hundred times better than the orthodox, with their supposition so just, so necessary, so uniquely true of an infinitely good and all-powerful first principle.' Bayle thus sought to demonstrate the supreme validity of reason and, at the same time, its limits, as well as its unsuitability for metaphysical experience or, if we prefer, its incompatibility with faith. Manichaeism may seem false and even shocking if we use *a priori* arguments*;* but we can also demonstrate, with irrefutable *a posteriori* arguments*,* that it is not, and indeed that it is true.

Thus, an adventure in rationalism would bring about a new metamorphosis, a new reincarnation of dualism. Bayle certainly preferred to set reason against reason—and, consequently, to regard the basic tenets of Manichaeism as absurd—rather than to expand and refine the concept of rational truth dialectically. He was unaware that the Manicheans had incorporated the absurd and the irrational into their system, unafraid to oppose reason, since the facts 'proved them right'. The principle of Evil was, for them, chance, chaos, unconsciousness. They saw no contradiction in establishing *a priori,* through reason, that there existed a principle of Evil absolutely opposed to being; and, equally through reason, that the existence of a transcendent God could not be demonstrated, for it was necessary that it be evident only to pure faith.

Like the ancient Cathars, Bayle takes as his starting point the constant spectacle of disorder and contradiction that nature presents to us, in order to assert—quite logically—that all this can only be the work of a perfect being. At most, we would be led to assert that this world is a *mixture.* 'If we feel pleasure,' says Bayle, 'it is the good principle that sends it to us, but if we do not feel it as absolutely pure and if we quickly tire of it, it is because the evil principle crosses the good. We can only explain our inner experiences by means of the hypothesis of two principles.'

Strictly speaking, we might admit that all material disturbances are explainable by the faculties God has bestowed upon the body, through the laws of motion He has established, or through the operation of occasional causes. But the same is not true of moral evil: 'The heavens and the entire universe proclaim the glory, power and unity of God, but man, man alone, that masterpiece of his Creator among visible things, raises serious objections against the unity of God (...). History is, strictly speaking, nothing more than the ruins and misfortunes of the human race'.

We were surprised to find, in Pierre Bayle's writings, Manichaean—or, more precisely, Cathar—arguments which are, as is evident, classic in philosophy and which reason naturally suggested to many other thinkers, but which bear such a close resemblance, in form, to those circulating in 1300 in the county of Foix, that we wonder whether he might not have heard them recounted orally, or whether he might have possessed a now-lost version of Jean de Lugio's *Treatise*

by Jean de Lugio: ‘As is evident,’ he says, ‘the infinite perfection of creation is opposed to that which limits it and, in a certain sense, denies it. God, being unable to deny himself in his essential attributes, could not be the author of Evil. We must therefore admit a second principle, whose essence is Evil and which seeks only to produce Evil.’

The usual argument of those who seek, at all costs, to absolve God of responsibility for having created evil consists, as we know, in attributing the origin of evil to man’s free will. It is free will that gives rise, in its consequences, to sin! And so, God is not the cause of moral evil; He is only the cause of physical evil as a punishment for moral evil. It was by rejecting these ideas that Bayle rediscovered, more perfectly and almost point by point, the dialectic of Jean de Lugio (whom he may not have known). ‘Or else,’ he writes in particular, ‘there exists in man a tendency towards evil, a cause of evil, under the influence of which he would have decided “freely”. And, in this case, since it was God who granted him this inclination, God is also the true author of evil: which is absurd and impious. Or else, it was the Devil who created this inclination in man, and we must acknowledge that there is an evil principle. In truth, there is a third solution: man was able to choose evil by virtue of a self-determination founded on the freedom of indifference.” But Bayle, taking up one of Jean de Lugio’s strongest arguments, states: ‘Evil, said the Cathar, could not in fact arise spontaneously from the creature of the good God, considered as such, unless there had been an external cause of evil.’

I do not consider it appropriate to dwell at length on the other argument against free will, which stems from the mind’s inability to reconcile God’s foreknowledge with the free choices made by creatures. ‘If God foresaw,’ says Bayle, ‘that man would misuse his free will, He also foresaw sin. And we do not understand why he did not prevent it from occurring.’ This is the argument employed by Jean de Lugio. But, even on this point, we find that the Manichaean dialectic is far more convincing than Bayle’s. ‘A good God,’ he says, ‘would have determined man to moral good, just as he compelled him to seek physical good.’ That is true. But insofar as Christianity, to which Bayle’s reasoning remains faithful, does not admit that the creature has the same essence as the Creator, we can always, through expedients, safeguard man’s freedom and, in God, the ‘possibility’ of making him free. In Cathar neo-Manichaeism, where the creature depends on God in all its dispositions, it is, on the contrary, impossible for man to be free in the foreknowledge of God. ‘Man,’ says Jean de Lugio, ‘has not received free will from a God who knows the future absolutely and in whose mind it is impossible for the future—with all the causes that determine it—not to be the future; from a God who—if we believe, like our adversaries (Catholics and moderate dualists), that there is a single principle—is the supreme cause of all causes’. Free will, as an illusion, as an ‘invention of evil’, could only come, if it existed, from another principle. It is to posit that man is determined to Good

by his God, who, when He 'causes' evil, proves that there is an antagonistic evil principle.

If I have insisted so much, to the point of perhaps boring the reader, it was to show the weakness in Bayle's dialectic regarding its relationship with Manichaean thought. He begins by decreeing that it is *a priori* absurd to reason, but that it is not, *a posteriori,* in 'experiences'. Why does reason divide itself against itself? Would it not have been preferable, from there, to open up new horizons for it, to seek a vantage point from which the fundamental proposition of Manichaeism would cease to appear irrational? Bayle certainly did not go that far in his methodological reconstruction of Manichaeism, whose truly profound, truly revolutionary significance eluded him. Jean de Lugio's ideas, though very rational, would have horrified him.

This clearly shows that it was not solely in the name of reason, but in the name of a tradition—or a traditional way of thinking—that Bayle both reconstructed and condemned Manichaeism. The eighteenth century would subsequently use his conclusions in a different way to combat and weaken Roman dogmatism. It comes as no surprise to see, at the end of the century, that the Marquis de Sade[6] attacks Innocent III, the instigator of the crusade against the Albigensians; harshly criticises the president of the Parliament of Aix for the public horror inspired by the executions at Mérindolle (is it possible to imagine, without shuddering, the guardians of order, peace and justice running through the province like madmen, with a torch in one hand and a dagger in the other, burning, killing, raping, massacring everything that came into their path...). But we are astonished to see the arguments of Jean de Lugio and Bayle taken up again, this time in favour of atheism. 'The will of this God (who ought to be just) could never align itself with the injustices inherent in the laws of nature: he must constantly desire the Good, and nature must desire it only as compensation for the Evil that serves his laws'. Once again, this is Manichaeism. The Marquis's atheism is based on a dualism taken to its extreme consequences. Evil exists: it eliminates God, or exiles him so high in his transcendence that it is as if he did not exist.

[6] Out of anticlericalism, the Marquis de Sade had become fascinated by the history of all heresies.

THOSE WHO RENOUNCE LIFE FOR THE SAKE OF THE EXISTENCE OF THE ‘ ’

If, at the beginning of the 18th century, Catharism was curiously reincarnated, at least in certain Manichaean and philosophical respects, in the work of Pierre Bayle, it resurfaced — in a second metamorphosis — but this time in a purely mystical form, in the poems of William Blake (1757–1827)[1] . Dennis Saurat deserves credit for being the first to point out that ‘the greatest European visionary outside the Roman Catholic tradition’ is unquestionably inspired by the most ancient dualist concepts, the origin of which is, moreover, difficult to pinpoint. It is true that some of Denis Saurat’s conclusions[2] are not entirely convincing: I shall confine myself to pointing out those whose evidence seems to me to be self-evident.

From very early on, there existed in England an initial ‘Cathar’ movement. Runciman writes in Medieval Manichaeism: ‘After Germany, the Cathars spread to England: in 1160, a certain Gérard landed at the head of thirty poorly educated individuals who rejected baptism, marriage, the Eucharist and Catholic unity. They sought persecution—which they welcomed—and refused to debate... A council was held in London against them; they were condemned and branded with a red-hot iron on the forehead. Gérard was likewise branded on the chin (...). In England, in 1210, Cathar heretics were still being identified: one of them was tortured in London on this date’.

William Blake

This was certainly not the form of Catharism that directly influenced William Blake. But there had existed in England, since the sixteenth century, a dualist current inspired by meditation on the *Gospel* of St John and the Bible, which must be considered ‘Cathar’ if we accept that the theory of the creation of the world by an evil principle — common to both moderate and absolute dualists — constitutes the essence and originality of Catharism. It is likely, as Denis Saurat suggests, that William Blake knew and associated with adherents of this dualism, whose doctrine has never ceased to spread surreptitiously and still persists today. Denis Saurat cites, in this regard, a work printed in England in 1926: **Oahspe: The Kosmon Bible in the Words of Jehovah**, whose main thesis asserts that the present world was created by an inferior demiurge and that humanity must free itself from all constraints and reject all the atrocities that this ill-created world entails.

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[1] William Blake, an 18th-century English poet, was one of the greatest esotericists and occultists of his time (1757–1827).

[2] D. Saurat, author of *Atlantis and the Kingdom of the Giants* (collection ‘J’ai lu’, no. 187) and *The Religion of the Giants and the Civilisation of Insects* (‘J’ai lu’, no. 206).

William Blake must have come across a book published in 1753 by Mosheim: **Commentaries on the Development of Christianity before Constantine*,* in which, under the guise of history, very similar ideas were set out; in it one reads: 'Beyond the "true" divinity'
— we think of the 'true' God of the Cathars — whom no one knows (for the Cathars, too, the true God was transcendent and unknowable), there exists, for all eternity, an evil and corrupt principle (...). The Mosaic Law was enacted by this architect and founder of the world, and Christ was sent to abolish the Jewish Law and save the world from this false god; yet this evil demiurge is so full of arrogance and pride that he imagines himself to be the one true God and, consequently, claims the honours due to the supreme God.

On this point, William Blake shared the theories of the Cathars and those put forward by Mosheim, making no secret of his sympathy for them. 'I am convinced,' writes the poet in **The Last Judgement*,* 'that the creator of this world is a most cruel being'. He calls this evil creator Urizen, who is none other than the rebellious Lucifer of moderate dualism, who strangely recalls the demiurge of the secret Bogomil scene, or Satan, the eternal principle of Evil, of absolute dualism: 'On that night, he led the heavenly armies into the great desert. On that terrible night when Urizen gathered the stars at his feet. Then he tore the Centre from its place, and uncovered a space beneath. And the earth was transformed into a globe, a narrow space, and began to spin, a sulphurous Sun.

'Indignant, bellowing through the thunder, Urizen descended, screaming, grim: "Now I am God for all eternity."'

There is a second point on which the doctrine of the great English poet is revealed to be in accordance with Cathar thought, and that concerns the mission of Jesus Christ.

For William Blake, and also for the Cathars, Christ did not sacrifice himself: he came merely to show the Way, 'to clarify the situation,' says Denis Saurat, 'to make the opposition between Good and Evil evident to all men. The crucifixion dispelled the mystery.' And as William Blake explained in detail how the Devil obscures all truths, we should have no hesitation as to the meaning to be attributed to his thought:

Jesus was condemned to death, following Urizen's machinations, by the wickedness of men. Los explains this to Albion, who believed in the necessity of this sacrifice to appease an angry god, which was not the case:

'Must the righteous man,' he asks, 'die for redemption? Does God's mercy require redemption? No, it is moral severity that destroys mercy in its victim.' He returns to this idea time and again: 'Is it not true that Jehovah only defers a debt on condition that it be paid? Is it not true that he only forgives impurity on condition that it becomes pure? If this debt were not paid! If this impurity were not forgiven! We would obtain the forgiveness of the pagan gods, the moral virtues of the pagan gods, whose mercies are cruelties; but

salvation from Jehovah is neither paid for nor has a price; it is the continual forgiveness of sins in the perpetual and mutual sacrifice of the great eternity."

It has always been so, and will always be so, as Jean de Lugio once observed: creation was simultaneously abolished and redeemed.

The Romantic epics

Romanticism favoured the exploration of Manichaean themes, drawing inspiration in its great epics (*The Fall of an Angel, The Legend of the Ages*) from a rather insistent metaphysical dualism, though one that does not seem to stem directly from Manichaeism or historical Catharism, with which Martine and Victor Hugo were very unfamiliar. The tendency towards dualism relates above all to their own characterisation, to the nature of their aesthetic concerns, to their unconscious structuralism: Lamartine composes through successive interlocking elements, through
'reincarnations', if you will; Victor Hugo conceives the real and the ideal in antithetical terms. In any case, *The Fall of an Angel* is a poem of reincarnation (not necessarily Cathar), and The *Legend of the Ages* suggests that humanity is nothing more than a single being whose individual modes and aspects are renewed in the ceaseless struggle of Good against Evil and are physically incarnated in order to purify and liberate themselves.

In the broader context of this revival of the epic poem, we have already seen the emergence, in the south of France, of some very significant works that are more authentically linked to the doctrine of the Albigensians: I am thinking of Alexandre Soumet's **Divine Epic** (1840), a magnificent poem that has been unjustly forgotten, and, above all, of Alexandre Guiraud's **Catholic Philosophy* of History* (1841). This work, influenced by the thought of Schelling[3] , but even more so by medieval Catharism, led to its author being accused of neo-Manichaeism by the Catholic press of the time. Guiraud found himself obliged to protest regarding his allegiance to Rome, but did not deny any of the incriminating statements, of which we highlight the most important:
'What is not in God,' he writes, 'is outside of him, and just as we have called Evil, like Saint Augustine, the negation of Good, we can affirm that Satan is the negation of God; and he possesses everything that God does not possess (…). Satan's power is such that he has managed to alter the very essence of this world from which he was cast out...' (The Devil is, therefore, for Guiraud, almost as powerful as the demiurge of moderate dualism!). 'From then on, he was the spirit of Darkness, the Prince of the World, the oppressor of the earth (...). The flesh is the human part of Satan (He did not create bodies, but it was as if he had: the flesh belonged to him. Only the spirit is of God).
'In this creation of which we are the product, nature is dominated by two agents; hence these alternations of Good and Evil through which it passes incessantly, this struggle of which our earth is the stage.' Even more surprising is our author's assertion, which draws close to the theories of medieval Catharism, particularly those of Jean de Lugio: 'We believe that the influence exerted by Satan, due to his own illegitimacy, is more vivid, more incessant, more violent than that of

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(3) Schelling, a writer and mystical thinker of the late 19th century, was one of the fathers of German Romanticism. He created a system of objective idealism (1775–1854).

‘God…’ Look, says Guiraud, at how Bossuet translated the *‘Libera nos a* malo’ from the Lord’s Prayer: ‘Deliver us from evil’! (The Cathars wrote this long before Bossuet: it can be read in one of their commentaries on *the Pater*. ‘Deliver us from evil, that is, from the Devil, who is the tempter of the faithful, and from his works’).

Napoleon Peyrat

This out-of-step romantic, poet and historian, was called the Michelet of Protestantism.

Anatole France admired his poem **Roland**. Raymond Escholier, for his part, regarded him—somewhat exaggeratedly—as the Victor Hugo of Catharism. Today, he is all but forgotten. His extraordinary **History of the Albigensians** (1872) is, alongside the **Song of the Crusade** (13th century), the only great, authentically national epic poem of the southern civilisation. We should not demand of him the factual accuracy of the events, nor the precise listing of sources of information, nor even a precise analysis of the doctrines, although we allow ourselves to be swept away by the heroic sweep of the work and the patriotic enthusiasm it arouses: ‘The fall of Montségur must represent for the Aquitanians what the ruins of Jerusalem represent for the Jews: the object of a mournful, filial, national, perpetual, eternal commemoration.’

And so, Napoleon Peyrat’s wish came true: numerous Catalan and Occitan poets turned their attention to this place and celebrated it as ‘the last path of the Roman homeland’. The Catalan Balaguer, author of the beautiful trilogy **The Pyrenees**, the Provençals Marius André (**La Glória d’Esclarmonda**, 1894) and Valère Bernard (**La Legenda d’Esclarmonda**, 1936), the Occitans — those of the ‘Red Felibrige’, the Fourès, the Estius —, the poetesses Philadelphe de Gerde, Louise Paulin, Raymonde Tricoire: all of them, whether atheists like Fourès or Catholics like Joseph Salvat, felt it their duty to contribute, at least on a poetic and literary level, to transforming Montségur into an ‘object of perpetual commemoration’.

The relevance of Catharism today

It is time we took note of this fact: in the early years of the 20th century, immediately following the First World War of 1914–1918, around a hundred novels devoted to Montségur or Catharism appeared, not to mention, of course, works of history, scholarly criticism and science fiction. If literary historians were as quick as publishers to grasp new trends, rather than simply copying one another, they would surely make room in their catalogues for this curious phenomenon which they dismissively call a ‘fad’, as if literature were always a matter of fads, and perhaps they might even seek to uncover its causes. It is surprising that, particularly in the South of France, no thesis, no
‘memoir’ has yet been devoted to it. I cannot possibly be familiar with all the novels, nor can I critique them: some are excellent, others mediocre, but that is not the point. I shall confine myself to citing the most important ones: those by the Duke of Lévis-Mirepoix (*Montségur*), by Raymond Escholier (*Le Secret de la*

Colombe), by Pierre Benoit (*Montsalvat*), and *La Double Ascension* by Maurice Delamain, which, of all the novels, was the one that impressed me most deeply.

Among the works published abroad, there are three that merit closer study. The French translation of Otto Rahn's book, *Kreuzzug gegen den Gral* (*1933*) (*The Crusade Against the Grail*), enjoyed considerable success in the south of France. Like Napoleon Peyrat's *History of the Albigensians*, this book appeals more to the imagination than to reason, which is why it attracts above all those with an imaginative mind. It was he who propagated the idea—utterly untenable—that the castle of Montségur was nothing more than Wolfram d'Eschenbach's Montsalvatge, that is, the 'castle of the Grail'. I shall return to this German-Occitan mythology, and to Otto Rahn himself, whose fate has been so tragically linked, through the centuries, to that of the Cathar martyrs.

In a completely different, yet equally poetic way, the English novelist Hannah Closs, having spent some time in Occitania, decided to imbue the myths and dualistic concepts with the luminous and somewhat austere form that suited them. In her trilogy (*High are the Mountains, And Sombre the Volleys, The Silent Tarrí*), she did not seek to reconstruct Catharism archaeologically, but to extract its human and contemporary value. Her hero, Loup de Foix, seeks only knowledge and liberation. These three books form what the Germans would readily call *an Entwicklungs-roman,* in which Loup de Foix essentially undergoes the same experience as his entire people. I have been told that Hannah Closs's novels were discussed at the Indian Institute in Bengaluru and that the Indians regard the history of the Albigensians as the embodiment of the entire struggle for freedom of the spirit. Does the spiritual climate of Mediterranean France not ultimately lie in the lamentations of the East? Might the Grail, which, according to legend, fled to the Indies, not have left among the Occitans a longing for the lands where the spirit withdraws into itself at death to free itself from its limitations?

The novel by the Hungarian writer Géza Hegedüs, **Hérétiques et rois* (Heretics and Kings),* of which there is a German translation entitled **Ketzer und Könige** (1966), remains little known in France. It deals with the struggles waged by the Bogomils of Croatia, and by certain generous lords, to moderate feudalism, to free themselves from the tyranny of the Roman Church, and to compel the king to recognise the natural rights of man. Part of the novel is set in France, in Paris. Hegedus's aim is that of a Marxist who seeks—as the Bulgarian professor Vladimir Topentcharov did recently—to highlight and extol the social and revolutionary value of the old medieval heresies.

Hermeticists and occultists have, as might be expected, attempted to revive Catharism, or at least to incorporate it into their own movements. At times, they have delved deeper into it, or developed it to the point of rendering it unrecognisable; they have frequently betrayed its spirit. I shall refer solely to two major modern spiritualist movements which, whilst not always understanding it perfectly, have interpreted it,

at least with intelligence: René Guénon's *Gnosis* and Rudolf Steiner's *Anthroposophy*.

Gnosis

In November 1909, a magazine entitled **La Gnose** was launched in Paris*; it served as* the official organ of the Universal Gnostic Church, which had been 'revived' some twenty years earlier by a group of French and foreign occultists. The driving force and editor of the magazine was, for a time, René Guénon, under the pseudonym Palingenius. His closest collaborators were Fabre des Essarts (Synesius), Jules Doinel (Valentin), Dr Fugairon (Sophronius) of Ax-les-Thermes, Albert de Pouvourville[4] (Matgioi), Léon Champrinaud (Abdul Haqq), Joh Gustav Agelii (Abdul Hadi), to whom we must add a few southern Freemasons concealing their identities under Greek pseudonyms. One even finds, in a list of contributors, an Esclarmonde.

Between 1909 and 1910, the journal published a Gnostic catechesis by Doinel (Valentin) and Guénon (Palmgenius), which, in the form of questions and answers, presents a serious—and above all coherent—reconstruction of ancient Gnosticism. Insofar as this gnosis was dualistic, or, if one prefers, insofar as Manichaeism was a form of gnosis, the catechism contains statements that are perfectly valid for Catharism, particularly with regard to the cosmic drama of the purification of souls. From the outset, moreover, the journal had shown a keen sympathy for Occitan Catharism and a desire to establish links with it; the patriarch of the Gnostic Church had assumed the title of Bishop of Paris and Montségur. Yet these neo-Gnostics failed to bring about a genuine heterodox religious revival, for they were deeply divided on the metaphysical plane. René Guénon[5] was quite hostile to absolute dualism and had even taken a stand against it. On the other hand, curiously enough, he did not readily accept the belief in reincarnation, the cornerstone of the Cathar system. Let us add that he felt more drawn to Indian wisdom and Muslim mysticism than to Catharism, which he knew rather poorly.

Rudolf Steiner:[6] *Anthroposophy.*

On the contrary, the society founded by Rudolf Steiner established closer ties with Neo-Catholicism. In 1921, Rudolf Steiner had broken away from the Theosophical Society, of which he was an influential member, to found Anthroposophy, which was far more Hindu in character. In his works, he attaches great importance to Mani, whom he regards as the master of the times to come — and even of the end times — and frequently leans towards relative dualism. On the other

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[4] A. de Pouvourville, author of numerous works on the Far East, in particular **La Voie Métaphysique**, an initiate of the early 20th century who influenced the thought of R. Guénon.

[5] Guénon eventually converted to Islam and died in Cairo in 1951.

[6] R. Steiner (1861–1925) claimed to have received Cathar initiation and to possess the true message of the Perfect Ones.

On the one hand, whilst claiming to provide the elements and method of a new 'spiritual science', he offered his followers and neo-Cathars the means to revitalise the old myths through a direct awareness of supernatural realities. This resulted in a modernised Catharism that seeks its path in lived mysticism and not merely in history and texts.

Déodat Roché: The Cathar Study Notebooks.

It was thus that one of his finest disciples, Déodat Roché, having published numerous excellent works on Manichaeism and Catharism, was at the origin of the extraordinary revival currently taking place in Cathar studies in the South of France, and beyond. Roché has always denied that he wished to found a new Church: 'The time of Churches is past,' he asserts, and rightly so; yet the courses he organises at a summer camp allow those who so wish to live, physically and intellectually, in conditions almost identical to those in which the Cathar Perfecti lived in the 13th century, and to receive spiritual teaching adapted to the needs of our time.

The distinctly 'anthroposophical' nature of his writings, the way in which he employs 'spiritual science'—which official science, as is evident, regards as worthless—and the tendency he displays to interpret texts in a traditional and hermetic sense, whereas scholars take them literally and, often, with a supposedly critical spirit that is entirely misplaced; his prejudice — which is the most dangerous aspect — that compels him to follow Steiner faithfully, even when the Cathars say the opposite: all these facts have concealed from people who cannot read, or who do not wish to understand, or who quite simply hate Catharism, the number of precise, useful and fruitful works that Déodat Roché has produced. There is no one in France—and anyone who reads him dispassionately will readily acknowledge this—who knows Catharism better. Since 1949, the Society for Cathar Remembrance and Studies has published a journal, the *Cahiers d'Études Cathares* (Arques, Aude), which contains, alongside purely occultist articles that the specialist may dismiss, essays on the history and philosophy of Catharism of recognised authority.

It would be ridiculous to criticise Roché and the members of the society for modernising Catharism and presenting it as it would have been had it evolved naturally from the 13th century to the present day. It is up to today's Cathars to formulate their doctrine. However, we should note that this doctrine, according to Rudolf Steiner's teaching, is not dualistic in the strict sense of the term. Déodat Roché is much closer to moderate dualism than to absolute dualism. For him, and also for a significant faction of the 13th-century Bogomils, the two principles do not destroy the unity of God; they are secondary or derivative principles that only have an effect in the world of restlessness and time. On this point, Roché draws on the metaphysics of Lactantius. It is for this reason that he does not place an insurmountable barrier between spirit and matter. Matter is purified; it evolves. The earth will be physically regenerated. We cannot deny that this philosophy—defensible in itself, and which, on certain points, agrees with ancient Manichaeism, where matter undergoes a

similar purification — departs considerably from classical Catharism (at least from absolute dualism), which regarded the two creations as absolutely antithetical and did not consider the gradual transition from one to the other possible in any way.

Catharism and parapsychology

Before leaving the realm of the occult, I cannot fail to mention the last two — minor — metamorphoses of 'reincarnated' Catharism. One dates from 1952, the other from 1960. They are too singular not to be cited, as documents, in a 'dossier' on the parapsychology of heresy.

The first concerns the abrupt and unusual 'Occitan' poetic career of the French writer Denis Saurat. Born in Toulouse in 1890, and director of the French Institute in London from 1924 to 1945, Denis Saurat is primarily known as the author of numerous works on the history of religions and English literature. He was already quite elderly and living in seclusion in Nice when, one fine day, he felt overcome by the undifferentiated spirit, which blows when and where it can, insinuates itself upon those who await it and know how to receive it, and takes on the voice of an ancestor dead for centuries. Denis Saurat heard his ancestors from Ariège 'speak'.

They were Cathars and spoke in Old Occitan. Acting as *a medium* — and despite having only heard Occitan spoken during his childhood and for a very short period — he began to write down the 'poems' dictated to him. This led to the publication of several collections: *Encaminament catar* (*Cathar Disposition*), *La Caçaire* (*The Hunter*), which caused a sensation in the literary world. La *Nouvelle Revue Française* even published some extracts...

In these rough poems, many of which remain unpublished, one finds, amidst a great lyrical disorder, descriptions of strange places, evocations of mysterious characters, incomprehensible mystical developments and, here and there, dazzling revelations and flashes of great poetry; at times the folksy tone of Ariège folklore, at others that of William Blake... The general theme might perhaps be: 'Fear not death; death has been extinguished', as if the unknown voices, in revealing to *the medium* the reality of the afterlife, were aiming to free him from the fear of the hereafter.

Nothing is more moving than to hear expressed in this way this spiritual hymn of Catharism, this soul of a religion that succumbed to the flames and was so thoroughly purified by the executioners that it can only be embodied in the language of those who, in the end, asked it for the supreme temporal consolation before flying to the Absolute.

Mrs Smith and reincarnations

The second metamorphosis — or manifestation of the Cathar spirit in freedom — should be added to the countless properly verified testimonies in favour of the possible existence of reincarnations, which Professor Ian

Stevenson, from Charlottesville (USA), has just compiled this in a recent work. Around 1965, an English doctor and well-known writer, Dr Arthur Guirdham, discovered that one of his patients, MrsSmith, possessed the supernatural ability to live, during the night, a second life set in the Languedoc in the 13th century. Dr Guirdham had never been particularly interested in Catharism, but he was struck by the precision of the details MrsSmith provided him with regarding the Cathar communities of Languedoc, the customs of the time, the characters, the landscapes and the castles. She had been Fabrissa de Mazerolles — a lady who had, in fact, existed in the 13th century — and she remembered having met or known a number of people, men and women, belonging to Fabrissa's circle or family. The doctor began to investigate, checking dates and names in the archives. He got involved and eventually had to admit the truth: everything Mrs Smith had recounted was, or rather had been, true. Dr Guirdham and I then exchanged a number of letters to better reconcile fantasy with historical reality: it was impossible to catch Mrs Smith out. It was at this point that Dr Guirdham decided to publish, first in English (*Cathares and reincarnation*) and then in French, with Payot, the *diary* in which he had recorded his observations.

I shall not draw any conclusions beyond the mere possibility of the fact in question. What surprises me most is the timing of these various Cathar or pseudo-Cathar manifestations, for I am aware of many others: they have occurred exclusively in the last twenty years. I do not know whether — as occultists claim — souls reincarnate every 700 years, and whether we are facing an invasion of Cathar souls from the 13th century, but it is absolutely certain that it is no coincidence that we are witnessing today, exactly twenty-five years on, the resurgence of Catharism. It is only now, and only now, that a certain philosophical influence of Cathar thought on the minds of people has become possible.

Simone Weil's dualistic experience

In 1942, circumstances led Simone Weil to meet, in Carcassonne, Déodat Roché and the poet Joé Bousquet.
'It was of her own volition,' writes Bernard Halda[7] , "that, whilst travelling from Marseille to the Abbey of En Calcat (Dourgnes), she asked to be taken to Carcassonne — Jean Ballard, editor of *Cahiers du Sud,* was accompanying her — to visit Joé Bousquet[8] , who had been bedridden since 1917 due to a terrible war wound". Joé Bousquet was, at that time—which also coincided with the publication of *L'Homme d'Oc et le Génie Méditerranéen* (*Cahiers du Sud*)—going through a crisis of uncertainty and did not know where to turn for support. 'Through personal means,' B. Halda adds, 'and by different paths, Simone Weil and Joé Bousquet, who contemplated the absolute, the fabric and the horizon of things, had long since committed themselves to a mystical path, where they met.' I do not believe that Bousquet was fundamentally a dualist: his thinking varied greatly on this point. The

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[7] B. Halda: 'The Conversion of Simone Weil', in *La Pensée Française,* January 1960.
[8] J. Bousquet lived paralysed until the end of his days.

his magical idealism — or his surrealist materialism, which was at once dialectical and poetic — compelled him more to reconcile opposites than to set them against one another. However, he had already written, in 1939–1940, several neo-Catholic texts that would form the prayer to be included in *L'Oeuvre de la Nidt,* which Simone Weil came to know
— with the exception of the letter to Hans Bellmer, which dates from 1944—during their meeting in Carcassonne: 'Light manifests itself only in association with the radiance of a mineral night (…). The real is the fruit of two hostile elements (...). This dualist creed, Bousquet added, is cited solely by way of example (a curious methodological move that, on the poetic level, resembles Bayle's on the rationalist level!). Truth is always at a distance from certainty: it cannot be grasped, but it takes hold of us and, through its revelations, inspires and intoxicates us...' He thus acknowledged that his creed possessed only a poetic and provisional value.

Simone Weil embraced it wholeheartedly and reflected upon it with all the philosophical rigour she was capable of. It was then, under the dual influence of Roché and Bousquet, that she became enamoured of dualism and of all those who had defended it in the thirteenth century, as evidenced by the article she wrote in 1942 under the pseudonym Emile Novis in *Cahiers du Sud:* 'Agony of a Civilisation'. A letter addressed to Déodat Roché leaves us in no doubt as to her evolution: she declares, as clearly as a 13th-century Cathar would have done: 'I have never understood how it is possible for a reasonable mind to regard the Jehovah of the Bible and the Father invoked in the Gospel as one and the same being'. Whether we like it or not, she admitted that two gods might exist. In her *Letter to a Religious,* addressed to a Dominican, Father Couturier, she clarifies her position regarding Catholic dogma. 'Her difficulties,' writes Bernard Halda in essence, 'stemmed from the Old Testament, from her confrontation with all non-Christian religions and with the history of the Church itself'. All religions tempted her: did she not write to Father Couturier 'that the study of Hindu doctrines shed a far brighter light on certain problems, such as that of chastity, than any Christian text'?

Far be it from me to doubt Simone Weil's Roman Catholic beliefs. I merely note that Joé Bousquet, who played, as she herself said, an important role in her life, and Déodat Roché, whose influence she felt for some time, contributed to giving her the feeling that, beyond the Platonism with which she was imbued, Catholicism could be developed to such an extent that it would cease to be incompatible with Manichaean gnosis. When she was transferred, on 17 August 1942, to the Grosvenor Sanatorium in Ashford, Kent, she carried St John of the Cross and Plato in her suitcase. She continued to feel troubled by her inability to resolve—through non-Platonic means, and perhaps Cathar
— — the opposition that seemed to her to be irreducible between the God of rigour and that of infinite charity. I am told that, before she died, she managed to reconcile the two gods. For my part, I remain doubtful.

Fate decreed that Simone Weil should die in *endurance,* like the Cathars. When Bousquet heard this, he was moved to tears. It is well known that they attributed

to his determined desire to leave this world as soon as possible, an explanation that is not inaccurate and which demonstrates his 'holiness'; I myself heard him say, in Carcassonne, 'that it was an injustice for us to eat when so many unfortunate people are dying of hunger'. Yet he consented to eat, and however ascetic his life might be, he wished to live it.

Now, from the moment she was admitted to Middlesex Hospital in London, she refused to eat, as she had been ordered (B. Halda), and at the Grosvenor Sanatorium, her wasting became extreme[9] . She died on 24 August at half past ten in the evening: she was thirty-four years old. On the death certificate, the doctor stated 'that the deceased had condemned herself to death by refusing to eat during a period of mental disturbance' (quoted by B. Halda). Suicide was thus concluded, and an inquest was ordered. Simone Weil was buried on the 30th in the section of the cemetery that the small town of Ashford reserves for Catholics.

Perhaps he decided—how could we know?—in complete freedom—to free himself from this world, which is in the grip of a monstrous god, the prince of darkness, from whom we can only escape by abandoning our bodies to him.

The final chapter of Catharism

In 1931, a young German writer aged twenty-seven, Otto Rahn, came to settle in the Pyrenees, in Ariège, at Sabarthès. He returned there in 1937. It was said that he had been commissioned by the German government and by Alfred Rosenberg[10] to prove that Montségur was indeed the castle of the Grail, as he had, perhaps imprudently, suggested in his book. It is possible that he received this mission in 1937, but I do not believe that his journey had any other motive than the interest he showed in the history of religions and heresies.

Reading his travel diary, **Luzifers Hofgesinde** (**The Court of Lucifer**, 1937), one gets the impression that the young writer was immensely surprised to find in the Pyrenees a small circle of Occitan occultists who meditated on the Grail and the Cathars, phenomena about which a faint inkling was beginning to emerge in Germany. It was these 'enlightened ones', who were, incidentally, very friendly, who provided Otto Rahn with material for his first book, *Crusade Against the Grail.* In *The Court of Lucifer,* he refers to them by the initials of their names. They were A. Gadal, curator of the Ussat caves and director of the spa, the Countess of Pujol-Murat, Arthur Caussou, an Occitan poet from Lavelanet; and, in Montségur itself, M. Amaud, an engineer from Bordeaux, with whom Otto Rahn made acquaintance a few hours after his arrival in the village. This engineer was conducting research at the castle with the aim, as he immediately told Otto Rahn, of discovering the Cathar treasure, the tomb of Esclarmonde — the description of which had been given to him by a

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[9] Simone Weil made do with a portion of food equivalent to the rations given to prisoners in Nazi camps.

[10] A. Rosenberg, the official theorist of Nazism (*Le Mythe du XXe siècle*), sentenced to death and hanged in Nuremberg.

sorcerer — and a Gospel of St John, very different from the one we possess and 'not falsified by Rome'. Many of these figures were, it seems, members of the Polars sect[11] and espoused ideas very similar to those circulating among Hitler's inner circle regarding the Hyperborean Sun; and to those of Hörbiger[12] concerning cosmography. Others practised spiritualism, summoned spirits and claimed to be in psychic contact with the Tibetan masters. It was the interviews with the occultists that literally turned Otto Rahn's head and led him to conceive the hypothesis of uniting, in an adventurous synthesis, his fantasies with those of magical Hitlerism. At the same time, he would talk, in the evenings, with the peasants at the Montségur hostel, and interpret, in his own way, the folk traditions they passed on to him, which belong to the realm of universal ethnography, or at least European ethnography. Otto Rahn never lied. All the legends he recounts were told to him, including that of the Tibetan book included in the appendix. But he lacked critical thinking and became unsettled by this imaginary and mythical context.

On his return to Germany, he published **Crusade Against the Grail**, which was translated there. It is likely that he managed to convince Alfred Rosenberg — —who was also interested in the Grail—that there was some truth in the Occitan legends which equated Montségur with Montsalvatge and that, in any case, Germany should not miss the opportunity to annex, spiritually speaking, these peoples of the Pyrenees, descended from the ancient ethnic essence... Visigothic and, by tradition — as the Countess of Pujol-Murat told him — anti-Roman. Alfred Rosenberg was persuaded and, in 1937, secretly commissioned Otto Rahn to search in Ariège, if not for the Grail, then at least for archaeological remains, mysterious objects adorned with 'runes', which would allow him to assert that the race of the Pyrenees belonged to the Aryan community.

Otto Rahn's thesis, as set out in **The Crusade Against the Grail**, is well known. Wolfram von Eschenbach's novel **Parzival** is said, in fact, to recount the exploits of the knights of Montségur. Parzival is said to be none other than Trencavel, Viscount of Béziers… The Grail is said to have been kept at Montségur. We deem it pointless to emphasise the utter implausibility of these assertions. However, in 1937, in his second work, *The Court of Lucifer,* Otto Rahn sets out his philosophical ideas with greater precision; these are broadly the same as those then circulating in Hitlerite circles and which Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier, in *Le Matin des Magiciens,* and, more recently, Jean-Michel Angebert, in *Hitler et la Tradition Cathare,* recounted the genesis and development of. I believe that *The Court of Lucifer* is the work that best helps us understand the direction of this new Germanic mythology and the efforts made to discover... unexpected ancestors. It is also in *The Court of Lucifer* that one can best see, despite the rigidity of the thesis, the deep and sincere sympathy that Otto Rahn felt for the little

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[11] The Polares: a sect founded in 1930 by Zan Bhotiva, whose members claim to be the custodians of the boreal tradition stemming from the legendary Tule.

[12] Börbiger's theories on the eternal struggle between ice and fire have certain overtones of Manichaeism.

Occitan milieu which revealed to him, illusorily, without a doubt, a complementary aspect of the Nordic character.

As *Luzifers Hofgesinde* is not currently available in any bookshop or public library, I consider it important to summarise its essential propositions:

1° — The book, profoundly and radically racist, extols the excellence of the Aryan race and endorses all measures taken to preserve the purity of the chosen race. The Jews are the implacable enemies of the Aryan spirit.

2° — Metaphysically speaking, the God of the Jews, Jehovah, is a cruel and unjust demiurge who defeated Lucifer and seized his crown. This philosophical anti-Semitism is already evident in Napoleon Peyrat and even, surprising as it may seem, in Simone Weil, who was Jewish! But, whilst he had no intention of acting in practice or taking part in a persecution directed against the Jews, he remained fundamentally different: Napoleon Peyrat and Simone Weil set Christ against Jehovah, whilst Otto Rahn sets Lucifer against both Christ and Jehovah. Otto Rahn's religion is a kind of Luciferianism.

3° — Lucifer is not Satan. He is the god whom the ancients worshipped as the Sun and the troubadours as Love. He is the prince of beauty, of heroism, of desperate courage, of rebellion; the joy of living and the Force of Nature. This true Sun is the Sun of the North, the one that Pytheas of Marseille (350 BC) had gone to fetch from Thule (Otto Rahn's journey also ends at the Last Thule). Hence the exaltation of the Hyperborean Support and, according to Horbiger's theories, the revaluation of the luminous Ice, of the cold midnight Sun. The peoples of the South fall asleep: it is the Northern Apoio that comes to awaken them.

4. — The Cathars hate Jehovah and worship the Sun: they are therefore among the
'courtiers of Lucifer': they are natural allies of Aryan Germanism (Otto Rahn commits a real contradiction: the Cathars rejected Jehovah, but worshipped the spiritual Sun, that is, Christ).

5° — In their Lucifer-Sun struggle, the Jews have always been supported by Christians (Catholics and Protestants). It is essentially on this last point that the position taken by Otto Rahn most contradicts the truth: we may concede, like Simone Weil, 'that the influence of the Old Testament, like that of the Roman Empire, are the essential causes of the corruption of Christianity' (Letter to Déodat Roché), but one ought to distinguish more clearly between theory and facts. In reality, Catholics have always persecuted the Jews: the Cathars have always protected them. Everyone knows that the crusade against the Albigensians was also an anti-Semitic crusade; and that Trencavel (Parzival!), upon leaving Béziers, took with him the Jews who were there, to save them from the massacre. In the 17th century, the Dominicans exterminated the Jews of Lorraine.

6° — Otto Rahn's work perhaps constitutes the most scathing indictment of Christianity in general and Roman Catholicism in particular. Yet, astonishing historical inaccuracies, gross errors, and inexcusable exaggerations greatly diminish the scope of his argument and, at times, render it null and void. The

The Inquisition committed so many crimes that there is no need to attribute further ones to it. As regards the Jesuits, whose doctrine he misunderstood, as well as their rule and indisputable greatness, Otto Rahn is particularly unfair. Let us add, finally, that the massacres organised by the Nazis surpassed in horror the bonfires lit by religious fanaticism (Otto Rahn, it is true, died before witnessing the unleashing of Nazi fury; and perhaps it was because he foresaw it that he committed suicide).

7° — The Roman Church, and this is one of Otto Rahn's central ideas, has always hated the Germans — who knew how to repay the favour! The crusade against the Grail was intended solely to exterminate the Germans of southern France, the descendants of the Visigoths. In Foix, says Otto Rahn, the men are fair-haired and blue-eyed. The entire Occitan aristocracy is of Germanic blood (naturally, he disregards the historical fact that the Franks, who were Catholic, were also Germanic; but, he declares, they were traitors, conquered by the Roman Church and placed in the service of Jehovah).

8. Conclusion: 'The Court of Lucifer' brings together all men who believe in the virtues of blood and in the superiority of the Aryan race over all others; all peoples who have taken Lucifer's side against Jehovah and who therefore work to eliminate from the Earth the combined influence of Jews and Christians, that of Jehovah and that of Christ; who seek to replace it with a neo-paganism worshipping the Sun and the forces of the cosmos, and with a naturalistic morality. This Luciferian morality, very close to that of Nietzsche, extols lucid submission to Destiny, as well as energy and courage. It creates heroes: those who deserve the noble Hell and not the Heaven of cowards.

Otto Rahn tirelessly searched the caves of Sabarthès in the hope of discovering the Grail of the Aryans. Some modern writers have even claimed that he found it; but this is fiction. What is certain is that, around 1937, he seems to have enjoyed a certain influence within Hitler's circles. For reasons unknown to us, he quickly fell out of favour. There are letters of his—which do him credit—in which he declares that life in Germany had become unbearable for him. They denounce him, watch him, accuse him of moderation and Francophilia. In truth, it is impossible that this generous man, whom contact with Catharism and the southern peoples—whom he seems to have sincerely loved—had taught the virtue of tolerance, and who, in his books, expressed horror at the Dominican burnings, should not have felt anguished at the vision of the Apocalypse that was unfolding. I do not believe he would have approved—assuming he remained anti-Semitic—of the extermination of the Jews in the death camps.

It is said that, on the eve of the 1939–1940 war, he asked the government for permission to go to France. This ill-timed plan, at the very least, was poorly received and hastened his downfall. He could not, it seems, bring himself to fight against a country — Occitania — which, according to certain moving passages in *Luzifers Hofgesinde,* had occupied such an important place in his life and in his Luciferian fantasies. Perhaps then, like Simone Weil, he

suddenly felt that it was no longer possible for him to continue living in Satan's absurd and monstrous universe. In March 1939, he went to Kufstein, left his luggage at the hostel in Söll and climbed to the summit of the Wilderkaiser. 'He was found, on 13 March, sitting in the snow, frozen to death, his face serene' (Karl Rittersbacher). I said 'from the cold'. It has not been proven that, as the novelist Saint-Loup (*Nouveaux Cathares pour Montségur*) claims, he took cyanide. The 'idea of death by cold' — so in keeping with his Hyperborean mythology — had never ceased to haunt him. During an ascent of the Maladetta, as he himself recounts in **Luzifers Hofgesinde**, a French doctor travelling with him told him that the troubadour Bertran de Born, driven to despair by his homeland's misfortune, had climbed this glacier and let himself die there: legend has it that he still lies there, transformed into a statue of ice.

Now, this story is pure fiction. Bertran de Born died at the monastery of Dalon, shortly before 1215, and the 'misfortunes of his homeland' do not seem to have hastened his death. 'I knew only,' replied Otto Rahan to the doctor, 'that Dante had sent this troubadour to Hell, where, beheaded, he carries his head in his hands to light his way through the darkness.' Should we see, in the intervention—imaginary or genuine?—of the French friend and in the content of his narrative, the expression of one of those coincidences, magical or poetic, which Destiny sometimes takes pleasure in resurrecting? Or, rather, the projection into the future of what, in the unconscious, was nothing more than a vague premonition? Otto Rahn knew he would die in the icy cold.

Thus, two leading figures, as opposed as Simone Weil and Otto Rahn, the Jew and the Aryan, were led, by very different paths, the former in spite of her reassuring Catholicism, and the latter in spite of his his Luciferianism exhilarating, and approximately in the same era 'apocalyptic' (1939–1942), seemingly dying in *Endura,* like the last Cathars of the 13th century, from hunger and cold[13] , both terrified by the dreadful evidence of Evil.

With Otto Rahn came the end of the Cathar-Hitlerian adventure, which had always been founded on deception, absurdity and the prestige of poetry... In 1944, exactly seven hundred years after the fall of Montségur, it is known that an unidentified German aircraft flew over the castle and traced in the sky not a swastika, but a Greek cross. It was the defeated and desperate Germany's farewell to the Temple of the Grail, as illusory and disappointing as the chimeras that feed the desire for power...

[13] Death from exposure to the cold was one of the rarest forms of *endurance.*

CONCLUSION: GOD LEFT THE EARTH TO THE ''

In an article published in 1954 in the journal *Synthèses* (issue 103, December), Edmond Rochedieu, reflecting on the causes of Manichaeism's success and those that led to its demise, attributes its ultimate failure to the fact that no religion 'can pursue or undertake its mission of salvation—which consists in elevating souls by exhorting them to overcome Evil—unless it begins by believing in the possibility of a real victory over evil'. I do not believe that Manichaeism and Catharism, insofar as they are inspired by dualistic principles, ever suggested that it was not possible to overcome Evil. But it is true that these two religions do not reveal the same mystical optimism as all the others regarding the true condition of man in the world. Not because they take all hope away from their faithful: in certain respects, Catharism, which asserts that all souls will be saved, is more reassuring than Catholicism, which professes that many of them—perhaps the majority—will be eternally damned. Yet Manichaeism and Catharism maintain that nothing is yet decided and that, whilst the victory of Good over Evil is certain, it will be achieved 'to the just' and, in any case, will not lead to the total elimination of the principle of Evil, which is eternal and indestructible.

This is what some Catholic polemicists had already criticised the Albanians (absolute dualists from Italy) for: 'Since the souls of the good god, they said, return to his kingdom and those of the evil god to his, why will hostilities between the two principles not resume?' This line of reasoning did not seem to trouble the Albanians greatly. The ancient Manicheans, too, never seriously believed that the subversion of light by darkness could be repeated. 'The trial of the Mixture, and its final defeat, as H. Ch. Puech says, rendered darkness incapable of renewing its attempt to invade the kingdom of God; the separation of the two natures, the superiority of Good, and the security and peace of light will then be definitive.' The Albanians, and their doctor Jean de Lugio expressly affirms this, had, on this point, adopted the same theory: the two principles are not equal in power, and the god of good always ends up prevailing, as Manichaeism claimed. Souls subjected to the dominion of Evil and pain, through successive reincarnations, and who have attained purity, are no longer what they were before: they have undergone a kind of re-creation that has affirmed them in their being.

Furthermore, the Manicheans maintained that the chaotic and evil forces would be imprisoned in *Bolos* and cast into the 'bottom of a pit covered by a great stone' (Puech, p. 83). This means that, at the end of time, Evil will be isolated, confined, and unable to harm or corrupt. The same idea, ultimately an optimistic one, is found in Occitan Catharism: chaos, which is Satan's natural element, his habitat — which, by right, if the principles were truly equal in power, would be capable of infinite extension — becomes, in reality, his prison, his 'hell'. The wicked are

cast out into the ‘outer darkness’, which is theirs. Let us add that the Devil, both that of the Manicheans and that of the Cathars, sought to derive all his power from ‘penetrating’, so to speak, the souls created by the good God. If this mingling disappears and becomes impossible, the Devil, reduced to himself, loses all power.

As we can see, the superiority of the good principle lies in its eternity. Whilst evil ‘endures’ indefinitely — because it is a principle — yet in perpetual transformation and chaos, the God of good never changes and is capable, since He is all-powerful in Goodness, of adding a little existence to those whom Evil has ‘diminished’. This is how Christ strengthened His being and eluded universal corruption. Similarly, in Catholicism, the good angels and the elect have been ‘confirmed in grace’ and can no longer sin, and in Catharism, the purified, liberated souls become ‘impeccable’. Reflective minds will see that there is not much difference between Catharism and Catholicism regarding the fatal destiny of the Devil. As is evident, Catholicism does not regard Evil as truly infinite: it had a beginning. But, after all—and although it is difficult to comprehend that Evil ‘which began’ could have infinite consequences and persist indefinitely—Catholic Hell will last for ever. The monsters will always exist. But, so that the good may be strengthened in their grace—an idea that early Christianity perhaps owes to Manichaeism—these monsters do not constitute a threat to them. It is evident that, for the dualists, the superiority of the good God (for the ‘struggle between Good and Evil is necessarily resolved, as H. Ch. Puech, in a victory for light”) is due to the fact that he is the supreme god of being and possesses, let us repeat, the power to prolong the existence of his creatures for as long as he wishes, and to make them as immutable and incorruptible as himself.

But this victory cannot be won without risks or catastrophes, nor can it be achieved without sacrifices on the path to total triumph. The belief that Evil is infinite by right, and that it is indestructible, has had grave consequences. I shall not dwell on those pointed out by the sorcerers: dualism undoubtedly served as a foundation for medieval witchcraft. To take the Devil’s side was, as is evident, tantamount to a condemnation, to a defeat, but it also meant experiencing the bitter pleasures of rebellion, of pride, of cruelty; the delights of the flesh. It was to desire hell, that is, carnal exaltation in a mixture of pleasure and pain.

For the believer who deeply rejected Evil, this world, subject to the prince of darkness, remained a threatening and terrifying place. Man felt himself to be the passive victim of a struggle between the forces of Evil and those of Good, which rejected him. What could he do against Evil, other than hope that the good God would triumph and that divine grace would come to free him from sin? For him, God was infinitely above. I believe, therefore, that what made the spread of Catharism difficult was the fact that it opened up two contradictory paths of action: either to adhere to the order of Evil; or to renounce earthly and temporal life entirely. On a social level, the same theoretical contradiction arose: if the world is evil, it must be changed; but how can it be changed if, here on earth, the Devil is all-powerful? In reality, religions, which are ‘the opium of the people’, also

They possess, as Karl Marx, moreover, emphasised, a revolutionary value (and particularly the dualists), insofar as they designate the established order as Evil. It is a fact that the Bogomils fought against feudalism and ecclesiastical tyranny; that the Cathars sought to make their followers richer, or at least less poor; that they treated bodies — even though they were the Devil's handiwork — and healed the sick; and that they even sought to replace unjust justice with charitable justice. In theory, they were supposed to renounce the world—it was the best way to overcome it—and become perfect: in real life, they considered it their duty to work to transform it. But one had to be very sensible or extremely enlightened to reconcile these two attitudes, which were essentially so opposed. And few men, in the 13th century, proved capable of doing so.

I shall not discuss the attempts made at the end of the 19th century by various philosophers—Lasbax, Prata—to ascribe a kind of philosophical or scientific relevance to Manichaeism. Louis Prat, a disciple and collaborator of Renouvier, having published numerous works: **Le Mystère de Platon** (in collaboration with Renouvier), **La Religion de l'harmonie*,* was, at the time of his death, working on a book that was to be titled **Un néo-catharisme** and which, as far as I know, was never published. The title is highly significant. And the oral repercussions, if we may call them that, of Prat's theories were considerable.

However, I do not believe that Manichaeism can be restored in this way in a precise and systematic form: its power stems from the fact that, in a much more general sense, it has never ceased to permeate the consciousness of philosophers and moralists. If the opposition of the two principles appears to certain people as elementary and childishly modelled on natural contrasts—night and day, heat and cold—it is also evident that it corresponds to the structure of the mind: error and truth, affirmation and negation. If, among the frameworks that the mind projects onto reality and which some mistakenly deem objective, few truly adapt to the nature of things, I believe that only those created by Manichaeism present, by their very generality, any possibility of being grounded in reality. Dualisms have always existed: matter-spirit, matter-antimatter, Yin and Yang, etc.[1] But the terms in question have varied with the times and fashions. Today, the dualism that persists is above all that of chance and necessity, of indeterminate chaos and necessary order. I recently demonstrated, in **Le Journal spirituel d'un cathare d'aujourd'hui*,* that Manichaeism was the only religion that dared to attribute a privileged importance within the cosmos to absolute chance, to chaos, to a principle devoid of intelligibility and, consequently, to Evil which, were it intelligible, would not be Evil. According to Manichaean myths, it was by pure chance that darkness came into contact with light and partially devoured it. Today, the notions of matter and spirit no longer make any sense; we no longer know who God is; no one believes that his existence can be demonstrated: they proclaim him 'dead' or in constant transformation. It is therefore necessary that

[1] The masculine and feminine, active and passive, principles in Zen thought. This binary conception, moreover, implies only a relative dualism.

the thinking of the best minds comes close, in any case, and through means that are certainly far too simplistic, to the old dualist system. God can now only be conceived as a necessary being coexisting with a reality that is half-nihilised and lawless, which resists him.

Almost all phenomena can be explained by chance (that is, by a game of probabilities). Most purposes turn out, in the end, to be more apparent than real and the result of the interaction of blind forces. 'The chances of life arising,' writes Jacques Monod[2], 'were almost nil *a priori*.' I would say, on a more metaphysical level, that the chances of being emerging from nothing were even slimmer. Is it not remarkable that all mythologies situate the origin of things in a primordial chaos, absolutely indeterminate and subject solely to chance, as if it were necessary for God to reveal himself progressively by introducing order where none existed, or that this God 'wanted'—which amounts to the same thing—'to produce himself' out of chaos? It is always disorder (chance and the fortuitous mixture of elements) that arises first. Necessity arises afterwards — indeed, how could it manifest itself otherwise? — to resolve and stabilise the irrational impulses of matter; in short: to prevent disorder from turning into order; and to prevent chance from permanently replacing eternal necessity (which is capable of imitating 'a time', 'by chance'). Thus, it would be just as absurd to deny the presence in the Universe of a blind and reckless power as to deny that of a reductive necessity exerting itself whenever it could. Chance, aided, it is true, by mysterious selection, may strictly speaking be at the origin of the emergence of life once, but not, I think, of its repetition, its preservation, and its increasingly complex progressive direction. We must resort to a structuring that stabilises chance, fixes it — even if only in the irreversible past where its consequences cease to be random
— and to take its results as given. This is precisely how the action of a 'God' of necessity manifests itself. J. Monod, who is rightly suspicious of 'dialectical' structures — or at least of their purported objectivity — is nevertheless compelled to reinstate certain ones, without which chance would destroy
what he has built.

Is it not possible to see that chance is confined to its repetitions, in the realm of large numbers, and therefore obeys laws that are not essentially fortuitous? This is why the human mind finds it difficult to distinguish the extreme improbability of any given event from its transcendent necessity. If there were scant chances of life arising from matter, and even fewer of being arising from nothing, what, then, would be the force, superior to this game of probabilities, what would be that 'all-possible' capable of imposing the event and which, as Abbé Galiani said in the 18th century, 'cheated the game'? Of course, we can always argue that necessity also arises from chance, but in this case we would be playing with words: chance that becomes necessity ceases to be

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[2] J. Monod: *Chance and Necessity*.

chance; unless we accept that necessity compels chance not to be entirely chance.

This is why the spectacle of what takes place in this world naturally suggests to the mind that it is subject to the antagonism of two opposing forces and, ultimately, to that of chance and necessity, as Democritus maintained, for whom ‘everything that exists in the universe is the result of chance and necessity’; and, as Joé Bousquet reminded Simone Weil in 1942:
‘Reality is the fruit of two hostile elements’.

What seems to characterise the consciousness of the modern average man is the fact that he is forced to admit that there exists a principle of corruption (a root of disorder) lodged in a corner of eternity, and to fear, precisely for that reason, that the world is subject to a blind, cruel or mad god; that the ‘demiurge’, sprung from nothing, is a monster; that Evil is infinite, that is to say, capable of encompassing all beings entirely. The Evil that is explained in man by means of causes, even inexcusable ones, and which is reduced to appetites, to needs, is not Evil. True evil is pure wickedness, pure madness, pure bestiality and unconsciousness. Never has there been such fear as there is today that the furious madness of the demiurge might be fully embodied in man and render him akin to an animal. Is it not significant that, from William Blake to Otto Rahn, via Gurdjieff, Simone Weil and Joë Bousquet, the same anguish grows in the souls of the ‘mystics’, the same terror at the idea that God might be a monster?

Here, Manichaeism regains its full force, asserting that this God is not the true God and that another exists; and specifying, at the same time, that the Other has become infinitely transcendent; that he is utterly unrecognisable, and that he can only be reached through unconditional faith; in other words: that his existence can only be a certainty for those to whom he has chosen to communicate the effects of his grace. Even if we do not admit that there are two gods, we must resign ourselves to admitting that there are two kinds of men: the saints and the wicked; and that, most likely, it is not by free choice that some are good and others wicked. They are merely what they are destined to be. They are condemned or saved by the action of two opposing forces (infernal grace and divine grace) which cannot belong to the same God. I believe that the monist — or one who considers himself as such — can only feel tempted, at present, to join the order of Evil. For everything convinces him, if he thinks correctly — reason, science, the experience of men and of life — that this world is absurd and hopeless, and that God does not exist, or is mad. The efforts that man generally seeks to make to ‘change’ society, to establish, for example, socialism, will, in my opinion, hardly be reconciled with the conviction that ‘he emerged from the Universe by chance’. If everything is a matter of chance, the ‘hippies’ are far more logical, for they seek to live by chance and spend their time ‘as it comes’. They are certainly convinced that corruption extends to the whole known world, to ‘just’ revolutions, to ‘progressive’ societies, and to everything else.

‘It is up to man to choose,’ Jacques Monod tells us, in terms so curiously ‘Cathar’, ‘between the Kingdom and Darkness’. But was it chance—to which everything ultimately boils down—that taught him that a ‘kingdom’ existed? From the moment he knows that the world and God are ‘monstrous’, how could he choose the ‘kingdom’ if he did not, *ipso facto,* believe in another God? How could he be ‘chosen’ by this kingdom—for it is evident that one is chosen and does not choose—if one were not rejected by darkness; and if the true and inconceivable God did not first manifest Himself in the form of faith, which is otherwise incomprehensible and merely expresses the effects of His presence?

A certain theoretical dualism—which sets God as He ought to be against the evil God who appears as He is (as in the Marquis de Sade)—leads directly to atheism. But theoretical atheism — which rejects a senseless God, no doubt in a desperate attempt to attain the incomprehensible transcendence of the Other (this is the atheism of the Manicheans) — transforms itself into an infinitely rigorous and pure dualism.

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GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS IN THE CATARISM SECTION OF

ALBANESE

This term refers to the absolute dualists of Italy, no doubt because the founders of their sect were originally from Albania. Their main centre was in Desenzano, on the shores of Lake Garda. Around 1250, this Church suffered a profound schism. A section of the 'believers' remained faithful to absolute dualism in its traditional form and to Bishop Balanzinansa, who came to exert influence solely over the elders. The other section followed the 'Elder Son', Jean de Lugio, author of *the Liber de duobus principiis:* he attracted mainly the young.
The Occitan Cathars thought like the Albigensians. They called them Albigensians: the two terms seem to have been synonymous.

APARELHAMENTO

An Occitan term, from 'to prepare', to get ready for. When they went to confession, they 'prepared themselves', that is, they recommitted themselves to a stricter observance of the rules of the perfect life (C. Schmidt).
For M. Duvernoy, the *'apparellement'* was the monthly confession of the Perfects before the deacons, or the bishop, or one of his coadjutors (the *Greater Son* and the *Lesser Son).* It was from one of them that they received penance. The same author sees in this ceremony a vestige of the Eastern Christian rites of the 4th century and points out, like some Slavic historians, similarities between this Cathar 'culpa' and the rites prescribed by the Rule of St Basil.
When the ceremony coincided with a gathering of 'believers', it was preceded by a blessing and followed by a sermon and a kiss of peace.
The *service* (Latinised form: *aparelhamentum*) is also known as *servisi* (service).

CHARITY

Latin: caritas; Occitan: caritat.
A supernatural virtue through which we love God for his own sake and above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves for the sake of God. This virtue therefore has two objects, God and our neighbour, and one motive, God himself.
A bond of love that unites the angels amongst themselves, men amongst themselves, and men and angels to their Creator. A principle of ontological cohesion and substantial unity very similar to what Pascal referred to

the order of charity, distinct from the order of the spirit and the order of matter, and infinitely superior to either of them.
We could not love God if God had not loved us first. God is Charity. Drawing on John (1 John 4:16): *'God is love; whoever abides in love abides in God',* the Cathars believed that love was part of God's very essence. It was thus that they regarded the supersubstantial bread of the Lord's Prayer as charity itself. 'Charity is called supersubstantial bread because it is above all other substances' (*Cathar gloss on the Lord's Prayer;* Ms A 6–10 of the Dublin Waldensian Collection; ed. Th. Venkeler). Cf. also: Paul, 1 Cor. 13:4–7). Charity constitutes the substance of beings created by the God of Good; this is why the Cathar Bartholomew, author of a treatise cited by Durand of Huesca, asserts that beings who lack charity are *nihil,* that is, a relative nothingness, and do not possess the fullness of being which is united only with the incorruptible essences created by the good God from his own substance. 'If all evil spirits, evil men and all things that can be seen in this world are merely *nihil* (relative nothingness) because they lack charity, then they were made without God (beyond God).' The two authorities invoked by Bartholomew are: Paul (1 Corinthians 13:3: 'If I have no charity, I am a *nihil',* a quasi-nothing) and John (1:3: 'Without Him was made that which is nihil', the relative nothing).

CONSOLATION

Occitan term; Latinised form: *consolamentum.* Spiritual baptism, as opposed to St John's baptism by water, performed by the laying on of hands according to rites reminiscent of those of the early Church (without the material elements: water, anointing, oil). This ceremony, central to Catharism, provided the 'consolation' of the Paraclete according to apostolic tradition.
Alain de Lille rightly distinguished, in the 12th century, as does M. Jean Duvemoy, the *consolamentum,* or baptism of the perfect, from *the consolamentum* or baptism of the mortals (or of the consoled), although they were exactly similar in terms of rites. The baptism of the perfect meant, for them, entry into the Cathar orders and the voluntary renunciation of the things of this world; the baptism of the dying (or of the consoled), administered only to mortals, gave them the hope that their sins would be forgiven and that they were on the path to salvation (which was not automatically assured). If the dying person survived, this *consolamentum* lapsed and they were obliged to resume their life as a simple believer, or to prepare to receive, in the long term, the *consolamentum* of the Perfects.
The perfects received the *consolamentum* and could, in certain circumstances, confer it in turn.

CONVENENZA

Occitan word: agreement, pact. Through *the convenenza, the* believer 'agreed' with the Cathar Church that he would be 'consoled' at the hour of death, even if he were unconscious and unable to recite the *Lord's Prayer* aloud. This 'agreement' came into use in the mid-13th century, that is, at a time when, due to war and persecution, believers often found themselves in mortal danger.

DEACONS

Cathar pastors who acted as intermediaries between the bishops and the Perfects and who also looked after ordinary believers.

DOCETISM

A doctrine according to which Jesus Christ lived on Earth only in appearance, as an image. Most Cathars believed that Christ had assumed a spiritual body, an angelic form, perfectly real but invisible to the fleshly eye, so that his physical humanity was merely illusory. Most Catholics, who do not believe that Christ manifests himself in robes woven in Heaven and sandals fashioned by angels — nor even that the Blessed Virgin appeared to Bernadette in the body of a woman subject to all physical ailments — are Docetists without realising it.

ENDURA

Occitan word: deprivation, fasting. A form of mystical suicide, by no means reprehensible: to renounce life for the sake of the Divine has always been the desire of true spiritual seekers in all religions. In the 13th century, it was common for the Cathars, hating the world and with only a few days left to live, to let themselves starve to death, after having received the *consolamentum,* because they were no longer in a condition to say the *Lord's Prayer* before eating and drinking, and because they feared that, if they fell back into sin, they would lose the benefit of the relative and provisional sanctification they had received from God and from circumstances, without having 'deserved' it all that much.

Endura generally consisted of allowing oneself to die of starvation or, more rarely, of cold. It was never encouraged by the Perfects, nor, a fortiori, imposed by them. Moreover, it only became widespread at the end of the 13th century, and particularly in the county of Foix, under the influence of the pastor Pierre Autier, at a time when the Inquisition was making life impossible for believers.

EUCHARIST

The Cathars always rejected, as they considered it irreconcilable with the principles of their religion, the belief that the Body of Jesus Christ was truly present in the substance of the host.

They simply followed the view held by many early Christians

who thought that Christ had spoken in images or figuratively when he said: 'This is my body'. Tertullian held this view. Origen did too, calling the bread and the cup 'the signs and images of the body and blood of Jesus Christ'. Pseudo-Cyprian went so far as to declare: 'Let us not set our teeth to bite into this bread!' St Augustine himself was not far from thinking that Christ had spoken 'symbolically'. And he attributed these explanatory words to him: 'You will not eat this body which you see, nor will you drink the blood which those who crucify me will shed.'

'I have recommended to you a sacrament which, understood spiritually (*spiritualiter*), will come to you' (Super Sal. 94).

In spiritual meals, the breaking and blessing of the bread, practised by the perfect, in conjunction with the recitation of *the Pater* which specifically asked God for supersubstantial bread, meant that they regarded material bread as a mere *signum* or symbol. The blessed bread was consecrated as *panis purus* ('pure' or 'purified' bread), and replaced the host regarded by Catholics as *verum corpus* (the true body of Christ). The true supersubstantial bread was God Himself or divine charity itself. Let us recall that as early as the late 11th century, Berengar of Tours had argued that the bread could not truly be the body of Christ.

The Cathars, and after them the Calvinists, ridiculed belief in the Eucharist in a manner similar to that found in Germany, France and Italy: 'If we were really to eat it,' they said, 'the Body of Christ would have to be immense to satisfy the consumption of so many thousands of men over so many centuries!'

It would have to be larger than the Ehrenbreitstein rock, said the Cathar of Bonn; larger than the Alps, said the one from the south of France. And in the county of Foix, in 1300, instead of Ehrenbreitstein, Mount Bugarach (Aude) or the peak of Morella (Spain) were cited.

These jokes will only seem in poor taste to those who are unaware of their origin. As late as the 16th century, Catholics would say: 'User le corpus Domini' to 'receive the host'. The priest 'used' the body of Our Lord. 'It is a strange language,' writes the Calvinist Jean Chassanion de Monistrol in his *Histoire des Albigeois* (1595), 'just like the doctrine from which it stems'.

ELDER SON, YOUNGER SON

They were the bishop's two coadjutors. The elder son performed the same duties as the bishop and succeeded him upon his death. The younger son then became the elder son, and another younger son was chosen.

EVIL

For Saint Augustine, Evil is a 'tendency towards nothingness' which manifests itself *a posteriori* in God's creature, through the medium of its free will. Evil is not 'primary'. For the Cathars, Evil is a

‘tendency towards nothingness’, which exists *a priori,* from all eternity, in the evil Principle and constitutes its nature: evil is, therefore, ‘principal’.
For Saint Augustine, the creature can become corrupted and tend towards nothingness; for the Cathars, it is necessarily, by essence, by nature, that Evil is corruption and tends towards nothingness.

IMPROVEMENT

Occitan term: ‘amélioration’. Latin form: *melioramentum.* Practically the only rite that believers were obliged to perform. It is a greeting, an ‘adoration’ (in the liturgical sense, that is, in the sense of the cardinals’ adoration of the new pope, and not in the theological sense of homage due solely to divine majesty, or of idolatry), which believers addressed to the pontiff when they found themselves in his presence.
It consisted of three bows or genuflections and a request for a blessing. As the believer asked to be accompanied to the end, we may assume that the first *melioramentum* was accompanied by a *convenenza* or implied it. This rite perfectly expresses the believer’s situation. He is not in a position to become
‘holy’, but aspires to attain his liberation one day. As Catharism did not believe in free will, these good dispositions shown in *the rite* constituted proof of his current moral progress and indicated that he was beginning to be ‘loved by God’.

NEIEN

An Occitan word. Noun: nothing. Corresponds exactly to the Latin *nihilum* (noun), ‘nothing’, or to *nihil* (adverb used as a noun), ‘absence of being’. *And* he says that man is nothing once *he* has lost his breath (Uc de Saint-Circ). In the Occitan and Cathar translation of verse 1:3 of St John: *‘E sens Lui es faitz* “neient”’, *neient* is a noun: ‘And without Him, nothing came into being.’ As this is the exact translation of: *‘Et sine ipso factum est* nihil’, we must necessarily deduce that *nihil,* an adverb, is, in this case
‘substantivised’ and means: ‘nothing’ (in the sense of: an illusory thing, with little true being) and not: ‘not… nothing’ (nothing, without Him, was made).
When the Occitans wish to use *nient, neien,* adverbially and negatively (not... anything), the position of this word in the sentence — generally before the verb — indicates this sufficiently: *Car ses me nien podez far* (John 18:3) (For without me you can do nothing).
To avoid any ambiguity, the Cathars prefer, in this case, to use the form **no* res* (not... anything): **E re no manjec ni bec en aquels dias** (‘During all that time, he ate and drank nothing’).

For the Cathars, *Neien* is not absolute nothingness, but the sum of evil and non-existent things and spirits, which were created without God's will and beyond him.

NIHIL

Latin word (adverb): not... nothing. *Nihil sum:* 'I am nothing'.
Sometimes taken as a noun by Saint Augustine and the Cathars, when referring to John 1:3 or applications relating to this verse: *nihil sum*: 'I am nothing'; *nihil facio* (Saint Augustine): I do Nothing (the nothing that is sin, or the nothing towards which it tends).
Factus sum nihil sine Te ('Apart from You, without You, I have become nothing' (St Augustine).
For the Cathars, evil spirits and all things evil are *nothing*—that is to say, entities whose Being cannot be compared to that of the incorruptible essences created by the 'Supreme Being'.

PERFECTS

Pastors of the Cathar Church who had received the *consolamentum* of ordination and the power to confer it. The Cathars generally called the Perfects 'Good Men' and, when addressing them, used 'Sir' rather than 'my lord' (*Sènher* in Occitan). The term 'perfect' is taken here in its Pauline sense: 'We, who are all perfect' (Philippians 3), that is to say: 'Christians already formed, but not yet consummated in perfection'.

PATER (*tradition of the*)

A ceremony through which the believer received the right, and the duty, to say the *Pater,* that is, to address God by calling him 'Our Father'.

WEATHER

That which passes, as opposed to that which remains stable (Eternity). A measure of that which decays, of that which is subject to transformation.
Transitory things, 'transitory' things, are those which, born of nothing, tend towards nothing and are therefore 'false'. The Cathars equate time with evil. Indefinite time, that is, the duration of chaos which had no beginning and will have no end, is, for them, false eternity, evil eternity or the 'eternity of Evil'.

VENIAE

From the Latin: *venia,* forgiveness. Ritual bows or genuflections which could have the meaning of 'a plea for mercy or forgiveness' (D. Roché). *Am gran reverencia, levant si totas d'en pes, e pueis baissant ab venia, totas ensemps...* ('Then they would bow together, making a genuflection' — *Vie de Sainte Douceline*).

LIST OF FAMOUS PERFECT

More detailed information on these figures can be found in the works and articles by Jean Duvernoy and Michel Roquebert, from which we have drawn the main points of these brief notes.

ABIT (*Guiraud*)

He is known to have been a canon from 1210. In 1226, he succeeded Pierre Isarn as Bishop of Carcassonne and resided in Cabaret (Lastours, Aude) from 1226 to 1228, the date on which he disappears from the records and which corresponds to the surrender of Cabaret to the royal army.

AUTIER (The) (*Authier, Authié*)

A family originally from Ax-les-Thermes, which, between 1280 and 1320, distinguished itself through its devotion to Catharism and its anti-Roman and anti-French zeal.

Pedro Autier, son of another Pedro Autier, was a notary in Ax, closely associated with the Count of Foix, for whom he appears to have been one of the trusted advisors. He left for Lombardy around 1296, perhaps because his business affairs required it, but certainly because his life was in danger. He returned in 1300, no doubt having been instructed by the Homens-bons who had taken refuge in Italy. He immediately set about reviving the dualist Church in the county of Foix, which, to a certain extent, he succeeded in doing. Skilful and courageous, he evaded all persecution for a long time. However, he was denounced, arrested by agents of the Inquisition and burned alive in Toulouse on 9 April 1311. His brother Guillaume and his son, Jacques, were also condemned to the stake for heresy.

BARTHÉLÉMY or BARTHOLOMÉ (*1222–1225*)

‘A letter addressed to the Archbishop of Rouen and the prelates of France in 1223, summoning them to the Council of Sens (where severe measures were to be taken against heresy), written by Cardinal Conrad of Porto, Apostolic Legate in Languedoc, highlights the actions of this fearsome envoy in the diocese of Agen. Vigoros of Barcelona (or rather of Bocona) had already paid him homage, ceding the estate and residence he held in the region in order to move to Toulouse” (Ch. Thouzellier, *Un Traité cathare inédit...* pp. 30–31). The treatise included in Durand of Huesca’s work: *Liber contra manicheos,* which aims to refute it, is sometimes attributed to this Barthélémy — is it the same person?

— who is said to have been from Carcassonne. Mrs Thouzellier has confirmed this attribution.

BÉLIBASTE (*Guillaume*)

Guillaume Bélibaste, one of the last Cathar Perfects, was born in Cubières (Aude). He escaped from the 'Wall' of Carcassonne and took refuge in Catalonia, in Lérida, where he lived making weavers' looms. Later, he settled in Morella with a few followers. It was there that an envoy of the Inquisition—a traitor—Arnaud Sicre, joined him, gained his trust, lured him to Tirvia and had him arrested. In August 1321 he was taken to Carcassonne and burned at Villerouge-Termenès (Aude), whose castle belonged to the Archbishop of Narbonne.

CELLERIER (*Sicard*)

Cathar bishop of Albi. He attended the Council of Saint-Félix-de-Caraman in 1167.

ESCLARMONDE of FOIX

Sister of Raymond, Count of Foix. Widowed following the death of her husband, Jourdain de Isle-Jourdain, in 1200, she became a 'Christian' and received the *consolamentum* at Fanjeaux from Bishop Guilhabert de Castres (1204). Later, she settled in Pamiers, where she actively promoted Catharism. In 1207, she attended the famous Colloquy of Pamiers.

A tradition—based on a prose 'adaptation' of *the Song of the Crusade*—attributes to her the reconstruction of the castle of Montségur (which is said to have been her property?).

GUILHABERT of CASTRES

The most famous of the Perfects of Occitania. He was a nobleman and belonged to a powerful seigneurial house in the Castres region. His brother Isarn and his two sisters joined the Cathar orders, as he did. Around 1222, he decided to retreat to Montségur. Isarn de Franjeaux and Pons de Villeneuve accompanied him. From that date onwards, Montségur became the religious and political centre of the sect. Guilhabert only left the castle again for brief missions. He died shortly before the siege of 1244.

ISARN (*Peter*)

This Cathar bishop of Carcassès — from 1223 to 1226 — lived for most of his life in Cabaret (Lastours, Aude). He was arrested and burned at Caunes in 1226.

JEAN de LUGIO

Jean de Bergame or Jean de Lugio, the eldest son of the Bishop of Desenzano, caused a schism in this Church in 1230. We know of this heresiarch's ideas indirectly through Raynier Sacconi (*Summa de Catharis)*, and directly through the *Liber de duobus principiis,* written by him or by one of his disciples. The fragmentary, incomplete information, presented in a rather haphazard manner (and without explanatory context) provided by Sacconi, does not

always correspond to what we read in *the Book of the Two Principles,* to such an extent that it is difficult to reconstruct Jean de Lugio's system. However, certain well-thought-out and vigorously written passages allow us to regard him as an excellent philosopher.

MARTI (*Bertrand*)

This friar was originally from Tarabel (Haute-Garonne). We know nothing about his family, which was probably very humble.
He attended the Council of Pieusse in 1226, was ordained a deacon in 1230 and, in 1239, succeeded Guilhabert de Castres as Cathar bishop of Toulouse.
From 1229 onwards, he preached in Lauragais, particularly in Fanjeaux and Laurac, as well as in Limoux, Dun (Ariège) and many other towns and castles, constantly reviving the Cathar faith and 'comforting' knights and commoners alike.
In 1236, he settled in Montségur, where he presented himself as a spiritual master, as well as an organiser and political leader. His diplomatic activity was intense, particularly between 1240 and 1244. He died at the stake on 16 March 1244.

MERCIER (*Guiraud*)

Cathar bishop of Carcassonne, 'ordained' at Saint-Félix-de-Caraman in 1167 (1172).

NICETAS

Pope of the Cathar Greek Church of Constantinople who presided over the Council of Saint-Félix-de-Caraman in 1167 or 1172. He was an adherent of absolute dualism. The *Acts of the Albigensian Council of Saint-Félix-de-Caraman* were preserved by Besse, a historian from Carcassonne (17th century) and notorious forger. They were republished by R. P. Dondaine (1946). The authenticity of this document has recently been called into question by Yves Dossat.

POLHAN (*Peter*)

Cathar bishop of Carcassès. He resided in Cabaret (Lastours, Aude) from 1230 to 1244.

RA1MON (*Bernard*)

Cathar bishop of the Toulousain. After the Council of Caraman, he was one of the commissioners tasked with demarcating the dioceses. In 1181, he renounced heresy and eventually became a canon of Saint-Etienne in Toulouse.

SIMORRE (*Bernardo de*)

Cathar bishop of Carcassès. He took part in the Council of Saint-Félix-de-Caraman. In 1204, he attended a contradictory conference in Carcassonne presided over by the King of Aragon.

TAVERNIER

Also known as Prades-Tavemier (and ‘André’: his Cathar baptismal name), a weaver in Prades. A companion of Pierre Autier, Guillaume Autier and Bélibaste, Tavernier was one of the last Good Men of the county of Foix. Arrested for the first time in 1303, he escaped from the ‘Wall’ of Carcassonne with Bélibaste. Arrested again a few years later, he died at the stake.

SAINT AUGUSTINE AND THE CATARISTIC ' '

Catholic Argument

The following is one of the arguments that Catholic polemicists used against the Cathars to prove that there was no evil principle. It is taken from Latin manuscript 13151 of the National Library, published by Ch. Molinier in 1910: 'That there is no principle of Evil, we can prove against the heretics. No privation can be separated from its subject, as is seen from the example of lameness or blindness. Evil, in fact, conceived as absolutely detached from its subject, is nothing, for no deficiency of being exists as a being. Evil therefore possesses no existence in itself: it exists only insofar as, as we admit, it adheres to a subject". We thus recognise the Augustinian theory of Evil: *amissio boni,* that is, the simple loss or deprivation of the Good. It is to this theory that Durand of Huesca, in his *Book against the Manicheans,* remains faithfully and all too closely attached. He is more Augustinian than Saint Augustine himself.

It so happens that Saint Augustine, starting precisely from the idea that Evil is always deeply imprinted, so to speak, upon a subject, ended up recognising in Evil, nevertheless, just as is the case with the sinful creature, a certain existence. Let us first recall, for greater clarity, the three very different meanings that 'nothing' and the words designating it — *nihilum* or *nihil* — take on in Augustinianism*:*

1) *Nihil,* more commonly *nihilum,* is first and foremost the absolute nothingness from which God brought forth creation. This creation *ex nihilo* was of no interest whatsoever to the Cathars, who believed, on the contrary, that the good creation was 'the essence of God' *(ex essentia Dei),* and the evil creation 'the essence of the Devil' *(ex essentia Diaboli).* On this matter, the theories of Saint Augustine and those of Catharism were utterly irreconcilable.

2) *Nihil* is also the absolute nothingness that represents Evil on the metaphysical plane. For Saint Augustine, evil is nothing. It is not an independent and eternal principle, and, in creatures, it is merely privation, *amissio boni,* as we have said: 'loss of the Good'. Thus, on the physical plane, deafness and lameness are not beings separate from the subjects. The Cathars rejected this theory as the thing in the world most opposed to their system. They did not, by any means, think that Evil was merely a privation of Good. Evil, for them, was a principle.

3) But Augustinianism is richer and more subtle than Durand de Huesca imagined. It is easy to see that Saint Augustine often refers to Evil—which, being nothing in itself and in the absolute—as *'nihil'* (treated as a noun: nothing) or *'nihilum*' (noun: nothing) when it becomes 'something' in the sinful creature that commits it. *Nihil* is therefore no longer, in this case, absolute nothingness, but a relative nothingness: it corresponds to the ontological state of the creature which, following

sin and corruption, has suffered a diminution of being, a degradation of its essence. And, naturally, Saint Augustine designates the whole of things 'that were not created by the Word' (darkness, for example, which does not exist in the light) by the same term *nihil* that the Cathar Bartholomew would employ to characterise the evil creation.

The similarities do not end there. Not only is Cathar dualism utterly irreconcilable with Augustinian monism, but the very theory of the degrees of being and their relative nullification through sin is not applied in the same way in the two doctrines. For Saint Augustine, reduction to (relative) nothingness affects only souls (created as good in the first place) and not, as in Catharism, material creation. Matter, for Saint Augustine, retains all the positivity compatible with finitude.

On the other hand, for Saint Augustine, the reduction of the sinner to nothingness had a beginning. It first affected the rebellious angel, who sinned of his own free will, and then the human soul, which in turn became sinful. In such a way that it is not attributable to God ('it is done apart from God'), but solely to his creature, or rather, to the freedom capable of inventing Evil. There is, therefore, no absolute Evil, no Evil principle. What was done without God, or apart from God, said Saint Augustine, is done by man.

What was done without God, the Cathars said, was done by the Devil. Thus, for them, the evil creation is originally and necessarily nullified by this satanic principle, which is incapable of creating incorruptible essences. The evil principle is *nothing,* like St Augustine's Lucifer, but it remains so for all eternity.

Even where Catharism and Augustinianism appear to agree, it is clear that this is merely coincidental and for different reasons. For example, for Saint Augustine, the annihilation of the soul through sin (*sine te factus sum nihil*·.
'Without faith I have become nothing') cannot be total, because God does not wish to reduce his creation to nothing. For the Cathars, the evil creation — though *nihil,* at heart
— nor can it be completely nullified, though not for the same reasons. To such an extent that we might almost say, to put it simply, that for Augustinianism, evil, which is nothing, nevertheless manifests its effects on creatures by diminishing their being ('the Devil, by inclining his affections towards that which possessed less being — *id quod minus est* —, began to have less being than before — *minus esse coépit quam erat* — and, according to his own nature, tended towards nothingness — *tetendit ad* nihilum'). Whereas, for Catharism, Evil, which possesses a certain existence, sees its effects nullified in creatures and approaches nothingness indefinitely without ever attaining it, for Saint Augustine, Evil is a nothing, plus something; for the Cathars, something, plus a nothing. These 'nothings' do not possess the same metaphysical meaning. According to Saint Augustine, corruption results from absolute nothingness, that from which God withdrew the free creature which may, if it so wishes, tend towards that nothingness from which it was created. For the Cathars, it stems from the satanic 'quasi-nothingness', that is, from the evil principle, for the creature is drawn from the essence of the Creator. It was in this

In this sense, Bartholomew asserted that the evil creation was drawn from *the nihil* and that, if it is reduced to nothing, it is because its creator is also nihil (relative nothingness).

Notwithstanding these differences, *nihil,* whether it be original sin, as in Catharism, or the result of corruption by sin, as in Augustinianism, presents itself—as an ontological deficiency affecting various levels of manifestation
— exactly the same characteristics. The final state reached in Augustinianism by the good creature, having become a sinner, is the same in which the evil spirits emanating from the evil principle find themselves eternally, and by nature (which is why, moreover, they join them in hell). We could represent the parallelism between the two doctrines by the following diagram:

Augustinianism: Free will-sin-corruption-a state bordering on nothingness.

Catharism: Necessity – diabolical sin – original and necessary corruption – a state bordering on nothingness.

The philosophical originality of Catharism is thus expressed, above all, by the considerable effort it made to transfer to the evil principle, and to the evil creation, all the characteristics that early Christianity and Doctors such as Origen and Saint Augustine had attributed to the archangel in decline and ontically devalued by sin. In this respect, not only does Catharism belong to the Christian tradition, but there is nothing in it that could not have been drawn from the Gospel of St John, from the texts of Scripture, from Lactantius, from Origen, from St Augustine; indeed, it seems almost directly derived from a 'certain' Augustinianism.

Cathar dualism, which is absolute regarding the eternity of the two principles but relative regarding their respective ontological value (has there ever, indeed, been an absolute dualism with regard to this latter point?), represents a doctrine that lies midway between Augustinian monism and Manichaean dualism. For Saint Augustine, 'evil is an inclination of that which has being towards that which has less being' (Jolivet and Jourjon). For the Manicheans, Evil is a substance: 'matter'. For the Cathars, Evil is a substance which, by nature, has less being than the God of Being and than the essences created by him. This doctrine has the merit of answering an objection that all sound minds have raised against monism, from the excessively orthodox Legrand (*De existentia Dei,* 18th century: 'I acknowledge,' he says, 'that it is difficult to explain why a supreme, unique, all-good being has not eliminated from the world—which he has preserved, founded and ordered—all the evil inherent in sin, all the evil inherent in punishment, which is linked to the Evil of sin') to the more profound objection raised against Saint Augustine himself by Jolivet and Jourjon: 'Why is there, in the being that is good, this tendency towards nothingness?' It also has the merit of rationally setting against immaterial and incorruptible Creation another creation that is its absolute opposite on the plane of being, since it remains so close to nothingness (*vicina nihilo*) that it is possible, for an 'existent', to be it without completely abolishing itself.

-BARTOLOMEU'S 'CATAR TREATISE'

Among the works written by Catholics to combat Catharism, none is more important than Durand of Huesca's *Liber contra manicheos* ('Book against the Manicheans', 1222–1223). Durand not only quotes a number of fragments (simplified or truncated) from the Cathar treatise attributed to Bartholomew, but, through the very refutation he provides, reveals to us, in Chapter XIII, the Cathar's exact thinking on the relationship between being and nothingness in the evil creation.

Cathar thesis

The creatures we see in this world are evil, false and corruptible. Just as they came from nothing, they will certainly return to nothing (...). We say that there is another world and other creatures that are incorruptible and eternal (...). That which is in the world—or is of the world—may be called *nihil* (relative nothingness, an 'ontically devalued existence'). The Apostle explains clearly: 'We know that an idol is nothing in the world (...)' 'If I have no love, I am nothing (that is, an ontically devalued existence). Thus, it is evident that if the Apostle without love is nothing, everything that lacks love is nothing' (2 Cor. 12:2).

'So, if all evil spirits, evil men, and all things in this world perceptible to the eye are nothing, because they lack charity, they were made without God. God did not make them, because the *nihil* (that which is relative nothingness) was made without Him' (John 1:3).

Cathar thought is very clear: there are things that were made without God (John 1:3); which, consequently, are not 'of His substance' (*ex essentia Dei*). They were made by the Devil.

These beings and things—evil spirits, wicked men, and the entire visible world—have less being than the incorruptible essences created by the true God. And they have less being because they lack charity, which, for the Cathars, is the very substance of God. Neither evil spirits nor matter were created in charity; they are, therefore, *nihil* (relative nothingness).

The theory of the relative annihilation of the creature by Evil — which is 'tendency towards nothingness' — probably stems from Saint Augustine (theory of annihilation through sin).

Refutation of these theses by Durand of Huesca

1) There are no degrees of being: a substance either is or is not. False, corruptible things are just as real as others, whilst they exist: they too were created by the one God.

2) The term *nihil* — which the Cathars turn into a sort of noun to denote a 'nothing', a 'thing' that does not occupy the same ontological level as the essences created by the true God — is always an adverb: it expresses merely a 'deprivation': not… nothing. *Nihil sum:* I am nothing. It never signifies a thing (whether real or illusory).

3) In all instances where it is of nothing (*nihil* and especially *nihilum)* that the texts of Scripture speak, we are faced not with a nothingness of being, but a moral nothingness or a nothingness of values.

Examples:

'You have been made a mere nothing' (Ezek. 28:19) means: 'You are nothing (Ezekiel is addressing the "Prince of Tyre") of what you would like to be (like God).

'The idol is nothing but a nothing in the world' simply means that it contains, in itself, no real divinity. 'You will lead all nations to nothing (*ad nihilum)*' means: 'You will lead all nations to idolatry', etc.

Durand of Huesca does not philosophically refute Bartholomew's theory: he even refuses to examine the Cathar's profound idea that 'things that pass are nothing because they pass'. What interests him is to demonstrate that the texts of Scripture can only be interpreted as Bartholomew does. And, as is evident, his position is, at times, defensible: the verse from St John could just as easily mean: 'And without Him nothing was made' as: 'And without Him nothing was made' (relative). The Catholic explanation may even be more 'true'. But, for the rest, his argument is weak and open to challenge.

1) It is not true that *'nihil'* cannot be used as a noun. For Saint Augustine, in certain cases, *'nihil sum'* means: 'I am a nihil' and does not always
'I am nothing', as Durand de Huesca believes.

2) Durand is mistaken — or acting in bad faith — when he implies that the Cathars always used the word nihil as a noun (which leads him to venture into desolate and incredible arguments by reductio ad absurdum). The Cathars — like Saint Augustine — only considered the word nihil in the sense of 'a thing rendered nihil' in verses 1 and 3 of St John, in the texts referring to it, and in a few other (very rare) quotations.

3) He opposes St Augustine himself in his interpretation of the 'idol'. For St Augustine, the idol undoubtedly symbolises the soul of the sinner nullified by sin. Also in the verse: Nihil factus es ('You were made nothing'), St Augustine understands nihil in the Cathar sense: Factum sum nihil: I have become a (relative) nothing, and not: I have become absolutely nothing.

4) Finally: Ad nihilum deduces omnes gentes: 'You will lead all nations to nothingness', cannot mean: 'You will lead all nations to idolatry'.

It is worth noting — which is rather curious — that the two adversaries are ‘Augustinians’, each in their own way. Durand of Huesca draws inspiration from a certain form of Augustinianism—and, in particular, from the idea that Evil is nothing—to refute the Cathar; but the Cathar relies on an Augustinian theory, that of the degrees of Being, to establish his own conception of being reduced to nothing by sin (St Augustine clearly stated that the Devil was nothing. And Durand de Huesca seems to recall this at the beginning of his Treatise. But he does not name the culprit).

Let us recall, finally, to conclude, that Durand de Huesca’s editor argued, in a recently published article, that the word nihil
‘simply encompassed, for the Cathars’ a set of ‘realities devoid of value’. The evil creation was certainly, for them, devoid of ‘value’, but it was above all devoid of ‘being’. Otherwise, Durand de Huesca’s ‘refutation’ would make no sense, as it merely replaces, in all the texts of Scripture where the words nihil or nihilum appear, the ontological interpretation—which was that of the Cathars—with a moral interpretation. In other words, the editor of the Liber contra Manicheos attributes to the Cathars the very theory that Durand adopts to refute them.

We do not really understand why Durand criticises the Cathars for considering that the Devil was worthless, nor this world, since that has always been the view of Catholics. Does Bossuet not invite us to judge them as nothing (in the moral sense and in terms of their ‘value’)? ‘Let us consider as pure nothing,’ he wrote, ‘everything that has an end.’

THE BOOK OF THE TWO PRINCIPLES

JEAN DE LUGIO

OF CREATION (excerpt)

God did not create darkness or Evil

... It follows from all that precedes that it is absolutely impossible to believe that the true Lord· God created, directly and in the first place, darkness and Evil and, above all, that He created them out of nothing, as our adversaries expressly believe, although St John affirmed, in his First Epistle: God is light itself, and in him there is no darkness (1 John 1:5) and that, consequently, darkness is nothing through him... For darkness was not created directly nor primarily, but indirectly and from a pre-existing reality, as we have already demonstrated previously... (Book of the Two Principles, ed. Dondaine, p. 108).

TREATISE ON FREE WILL (excerpt)

Against free will

Just as it is impossible for the past not to be the past, so too is it impossible for the future not to be the future. Above all, in God, who has known from the beginning what must happen—that is, the causes by which the future is possible before it comes into existence—it was certainly necessary for the future to be absolutely determined in his mind, since he knew and understood of himself, from eternity, all the causes necessary to bring the future to its end. All the more so since, it being true that there is only one principal (or rather, primary) principle, God is the supreme cause of all causes. And, all the more so, if it is true that God does what He wills and that His power is not hindered by any other, as the adversaries of the truth (the Catholics and the moderate dualists) assert.

And furthermore: if God knew perfectly, from the beginning, that his angels would become demons in the future, due to the constitution which he himself had given them at the beginning, and since all the causes by which it was necessary for these angels to subsequently become demons were present in his Providence; if it is true, on the other hand, that God did not wish to create them differently, it necessarily follows that the angels never knew how to avoid becoming demons. They could not do so because it is impossible for what God knows to be the future to be transformed in any way into what will not be the future; and, above all, if we consider that God knows everything, from all eternity, according to the theory already set out.

How, then, can the ignorant claim that the angels could have remained forever good, holy and humble in the presence of their Lord, since this was absolutely impossible, throughout all eternity, in divine Providence?

They are therefore compelled to acknowledge, in accordance with their own thesis and in full acceptance of these perfectly true arguments, that God, from the very beginning, knowingly and with full awareness, created and fashioned his angels with such an imperfection that they could in no way avoid evil. But then this God, of whom we have previously affirmed that He was good, holy and just, and beyond all praise (as we have shown above), would be the supreme cause and the principle of all evil: which must be absolutely denied. Consequently, it is necessary to recognise the existence of two principles: that of Good and that of Evil; the latter being the origin (*caput*) and the cause of the angels' imperfection, as, indeed, of all Evil. (*Book of the Two Principles,* p. 203).

SUMMARY FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF THE IGNORANT (excerpt)

We present several extracts from Jean Lugio's *Book of the Two Principles*, one of the few Cathar thinkers whose writings have come down to us. These texts are also quoted in René Nelli's work *Ecritures Cathares* (Edition Planète, 1968).

My intention is to provide a summary of what has just been said regarding the creation of heaven, earth and the sea, for the instruction of the uninformed. I believe that in the Holy Scriptures, the *terms 'heavens' and 'earth'* are sometimes used to refer to the creatures of the true God, endowed with intelligence and capable of comprehending and understanding, and not merely to the ever-changing and irrational elements of this world. As David says: *'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims the work of His* hands' (Psalm XVIII, 1). It is written in *Deuteronomy:*
'Heavens, hear what I am about to say; let the earth listen to the words of my mouth' (32:1); and in Isaiah: *'Heavens, listen, and you, earth, give ear; it is the Lord who has* spoken' (Isa. 1:2). David also says: *'Earth, earth, hear the word of the* Lord' (Jer. 22:29) and further on: *'You have made a way through the sea; you have walked upon the* waves' (Ps. 76:20). And it is of these ways, we think, that David intends to speak when he says: *'The ways of the Lord are all mercy and* truth' (Ps. XXIV, 10).

We therefore understand 'heaven, earth and sea' to refer to the celestial realms. Indeed, St John states in the Book of Revelation: 'And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying: "To him who sits on the throne and to Christ be blessing and honour, glory and power for ever and ever"' (Rev. 5:13). And David: 'I believe I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living' (Ps. XXVI, 13). He also says: 'Your Spirit, which is supremely good, will lead me to a righteous land' (Ps. CXLII, 10). Solomon declares: 'But the righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever and ever' (Ps. 36:29). Christ commanded that 'we should never swear by heaven, for it is God's throne' — a throne to which David certainly refers when he says: 'Your throne, O God, shall endure for ever' (Ps. XLIV, 7) — 'nor by the earth, for it is his footstool' (Matt. V, 34–35). It is Our Lord Himself who adds 'for it is his footstool' (Heb. 1:8). And it is to this footstool, one thinks, that David alludes: 'Fear the Lord, our God, and worship the footstool of his feet, for it is holy' (Ps. 98:5).

I fully acknowledge that God our Lord is the Creator and Author of this creation, but not of the impotent and empty elements of this world to which the *Epistle to the Galatians* perhaps refers*: 'How is it that you are turning back to those impotent and empty elements, under which you wish to be enslaved all over again?*' (Gal. 4:9). The Apostle also says to the Colossians: *'If, having died in Christ Jesus, you are dead to these crude* "elements" *of the world, how can you allow laws to be imposed on you, as if you were still living in this (first state of) the world? 'Do not eat (they say, such-and-such), do not taste (this), do not touch (that). Yet these are things that are consumed by* use' (Col. 2:20–22). Even less can we admit that Our Lord is the creator and author of death and of things which are, by their very nature, in death, because, as it is written in the Book of *Wisdom: 'God did not make death, nor does he rejoice in the destruction of the* living' (Wis. 1:13). There is, therefore, undoubtedly another creator or 'author', who is the principle and cause of death, of perdition, and of all evil, as we have explained earlier with sufficient clarity.

On the omnipotence of the Lord, the true God

I should now like to speak of the omnipotence of the Lord, the true God, which so often allows our adversaries to appear glorious when they argue against us that there is no power other than their own.

Although, in the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, God Our Lord is called almighty, we must not think that He is so because He is capable of doing — and to do — all evils, for there are many evils *which the Lord cannot — nor ever will be able to — do.* As the Apostle says to the Hebrews: *'It is impossible for God to* lie' (Heb. 6:18); and the same Apostle declares in the Second Epistle to Timothy: *'If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful; for he cannot deny* himself' (2 Tim. 2:13). Nor should we think that this good God possesses the power to destroy himself, and to commit every sort of malevolence against all reason and all justice: this is all the more impossible inasmuch as it is certain that he is not the absolute cause of evil. If it is objected to us: 'We have the right to assert, on the contrary, that the Lord is all-powerful because not only can he do—and does—all good, but also because *he could do* all evil—even lie and destroy himself—*if he wished*; but he does not wish to'; the answer is easy.

That God cannot do evil

If God *does* not *will* all evils, if He does not wish to lie or destroy Himself, then, certainly, He cannot *do so.* For what God, in His unity, does not will, He also cannot do; and what He cannot do, He does not will. And, in this sense, we may affirm that the power to sin and to do evil (all evils) does not belong to the true God. The reason is as follows: everything that is conceived of God as His attribute is God Himself, for He is not composite and does not contain any 'accidents', as scholars know. It necessarily follows, then, that God and his will are one and the same. The good God cannot, therefore, lie or commit evil acts unless he wishes to, because this true God

cannot do what he does not wish to do, bearing in mind — we repeat — that he and his will are one and the same thing.

That God cannot create another God

I can further assert, reasonably and without fear of being mistaken, that the true God, with all His power, cannot, has never been able, and will never be able—neither voluntarily, nor involuntarily, nor in any other way—to create another God, Lord and Creator, who is similar and absolutely equal to Himself in every respect; which I prove: it is, in fact, impossible for the good God to make another God similar to himself in all things, that is to say: eternal and everlasting, creator and author of all good things, without beginning or end; who has never been made, nor created, nor begotten by anyone, just as the good God has never been made, nor created, nor begotten. But this does not mean that the Holy Scriptures assert that the true God is an impotent God. We must therefore believe with certainty that the good God is not described as almighty because *he has been able* to bring about or *is able* to bring about all the evils that have been, are, and will be, but because he is truly almighty *with regard to all the goods* that have been, are, and will be, all the more so because he is the absolute cause and the source of all good, and because he is never, in any way, in himself and essentially, the cause of any evil. It follows, therefore, that the true God is called almighty by the wise, in all that he does, has done or will do in the future, but that people who think rightly cannot call him almighty in relation to the supposed power he would possess to do what he has never done, what he does not do, and what he will never do. As for the argument that 'if he does not do it, it is because he does not wish to', we have already shown that it is without merit, for he and his will are one and the same.

That God does not have the power to do evil, and that there is another power, which is Evil

Since God is not powerful in relation to evil—since He has no power to bring about evil—we must firmly believe that there is another principle which is powerful in evil. It is from this that all evils that have been, are, and will be arise; it was certainly to this that David referred when he said: *'Why do* you *take pride in your wickedness, you who are only powerful in committing iniquity? Your tongue has meditated on injustice all day long; you have made your deceit pass like a sharp blade. You have loved wickedness more than goodness, and preferred a tongue of iniquity to that of* justice' (Ps. LI, 3–5). And St John states in *Revelation: 'The great dragon, that ancient serpent known as the devil and Satan, was cast down to the* earth' (Rev. 12:9); and Christ in the Gospel of St Luke: *'The seed is the word of God. Those who are marked by the edge of the path where it falls are those who hear the word, and it is from these hearts that the devil later comes to snatch away this word, for fear that they might believe and be saved"* (Luke 8:11–12). The prophet Daniel says: *'And as I watched, I saw that this beast waged war against the saints and prevailed against them, until God appeared. He then gave the saints of the Most High the power to judge,* etc.' (Dan. 7:21–22); and he further states: *'Another shall rise after them, more powerful than the*

precedents, and will bring down three kings. He will speak insolently against the Most High, trample the saints of the Most High underfoot, and think himself able to change times and laws' (Dan. 7:24–25); and again: 'But (from one of these four horns) came forth a smaller one, which grew towards the south, the east, and the mighty peoples. It raised its mighty horns against the armies of heaven, and overcame the strongest and those who were like stars, and trampled them underfoot. It even rose up against the Prince of the mighty, took away his daily sacrifice, and desecrated the place of his sanctuary' (Dan. 8:9–11). One may read in the Revelation of St John: 'Another sign appeared in heaven: a red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his seven heads. He dragged a third of the stars of heaven behind his tail, and cast them down to the earth' (Rev. 12:3–4); and furthermore:
'And she was given power to wage war for forty-two months. So she opened her mouth to blaspheme God, to blaspheme his name, his dwelling place, and those who dwell in heaven. She was also given power to wage war against the saints and to overcome them' (Rev. 3:5–7). On the basis of these testimonies, sensible people consider it impossible that this Mighty One, as well as his power or strength, could have been created—essentially and directly—by the Lord, since he works mercilessly against him, and that this God, our God, strives vigorously to combat him. What the true God would not do, if evil came from him, in all its forms, as almost all our adversaries maintain.

On the destruction of the 'Mighty One of Evil'

It is clearly stated in the Holy Scriptures that the Lord will destroy the 'Mighty One' and all his forces, who fight against Him and against His creation. David said, in fact, of him who is mighty in wickedness: *'Therefore God will destroy you forever; He will uproot you from your place, drive you out of your tent, and tear your roots from the land of the living'* (Ps. LI, 7). And to ask, it is thought, for help from his God against this Mighty One, David also said: *'Break the arms of the wicked and the evil; punish them for their transgressions and they shall vanish. The Lord shall reign for ever and* ever' (Ps. X, 15–16). He also said: *'A moment more and the wicked man will vanish; you will look for the place where he stood and will not see him'* (Ps. XXXVI, 10). It was written in *the Proverbs of Solomon: 'The wicked man will be rejected for his malice'* (Prov. XIV, 32). The Apostle, alluding to the destruction of the
'The Mighty One', speaking of the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ, said to the Hebrews: *'…so that through death he might destroy the one who holds the power of death, that is, the* devil' (Heb. 2:14). Thus, Our Lord strove to destroy not only this Mighty One, but also all the Powers or Dominions which at times seemed, through the Mighty One, to dominate the creatures of the good God who were subject to the dominion of that evil one. This is what the Blessed Virgin says in the Gospel according to St Luke:
'He *has brought* down *the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble* estate' (Luke 1:52); and the Apostle, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians: *'Then shall come the end of all things, when he shall have delivered the kingdom unto his God and Father, and when he shall have put all rule and all authority and power to nothing... and death shall be the last to be destroyed'* (1 Corinthians 15:24–26). The same

The Apostle said to the Colossians: *'We give thanks to God the Father, who, through the light of faith, has made us worthy to share in the destiny and inheritance of the saints; who has rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his* beloved Son' (Col. 1:12–13). He also says: *'For when you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, Jesus Christ brought you to life with himself, forgiving your sins. He has wiped out, by his command, the written code of regulations that stood against us; he has completely abolished this code that was against us by nailing it to his cross. And, having disarmed the principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of them, having triumphed over them by* himself" (Col. 2:13–15). Thus St Paul was sent by Jesus Christ to strip this Power of its power, as was written on this subject in *the Acts of the Apostles: 'I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and witness of the things you have seen, and also of those I will show you by appearing to you again. And I will deliver you from this people and from the Gentiles to whom I am now sending you, to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God; and that, through their faith in me, they may receive the forgiveness of their sins and share in the inheritance of* the saints' (Acts 26:16–18). And Christ says, in the Gospel of St Matthew: *'You came armed with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a thief; I was always sitting among you, teaching in the temple, and you did not arrest* me' (Matthew 26:55). *'But your hour has come, and the power of* darkness' (Luke 22:53). We must believe that the power of Satan and of darkness cannot proceed directly from the true God, for if the power of Satan and of darkness were to result directly and immediately from the true God — along with all other powers, virtues and dominions (of evil) — as the ignorant claim, it would be incomprehensible that Paul and all the other faithful of Jesus Christ could have been 'rescued from the power of darkness'. Nor how they could have been converted from this power of Satan to the true God. Above all, if we consider that, by being snatched from the power of darkness, they were in reality, properly and essentially, snatched from that of Our Lord, since all powers and virtues emanate (according to the faith of our adversaries), properly and essentially, from the good God. And how could this good God strip away and eliminate any power other than his own, if it is true that there is no other before him, as all the adversaries of these true Christians—who rightly call themselves *Albanians*—claim*?*

On the evil principle

That is why, in the opinion of all the righteous, it is absolutely necessary to believe that there is another principle, that of Evil, which is *powerful in iniquity,* and from which the power of Satan, that of darkness and of all other dominions that oppose the true God, derive singularly and chiefly, as we have already shown and as we hope, with God's help, to show even more clearly in what follows. Were this not so, these same wise men would see, very clearly, that the divine Power fights against itself, destroys itself, and is always at war with itself. The Apostle says to the Ephesians: *'Finally, my brothers, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the full armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil,*

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of this world—that is, of this present age of darkness—against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Take up, therefore, all the armour of God, so that you may be able to stand firm against the evil days, and remain steadfast without neglecting any of your duties, etc. Cover yourselves entirely with the shield of faith, with which you may extinguish all the fiery darts of the *evil* spirits' (Ephesians, VI, 10–13; 16). Thus, the virtues and powers of the Lord would be fighting amongst themselves every day, of their own accord, if there were no other power besides His! *It is* absurd to think this way of the true God. It follows, therefore, without any doubt, that there exists another power or *a* false *Power*, which God constantly strives to combat, as we have clearly shown to those who are capable of understanding.

Of the foreign god and many other gods

Anyone who has carefully considered the body of genuinely true arguments we have just recalled will readily admit that there is another God, lord and prince, apart from the true God, and that his existence is demonstrated by the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures. Indeed, the Lord says, through the mouth of Isaiah: *'Since you have forsaken me to worship a foreign god in your own land, you shall be subjected to foreigners in a foreign* land' (Jer. 5:19). It is also written: *'Gather together, come and draw near, you who have been saved from the nations. The others are steeped in ignorance and erect a wooden statue in his honour and direct their prayers to a God who cannot* save' (Isa. 45:20). And further still: *'Lord, our God, foreign masters have subjugated us against you; grant that, whilst in you, we may remember only your* name' (Isa., XXVI, 13). And David said: *'Hearken, my people, and I will entrust my will to you. Israel, if you listen to me, there shall be no new God among you, and you shall not worship a foreign* God' (Ps. 80:9–10). He also said: *'If we forget the name of our God, and if we stretch out our hands to a foreign God, will God not call us to account?*' (Ps. 43:21). And again: *'The princes of the peoples have gathered together and joined themselves to the God of Abraham, for the mighty gods of the earth have risen up* exceedingly' (Ps. XLVI, 10). And again: *'All the gods of the nations are* demons' (Ps. 95:5). Zephaniah declares: *'The Lord will be terrible in his punishment; he will defeat all the gods of the earth' (Zeph.* 2:11); and Jeremiah: *'The people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem have conspired against me. They have run to worship* foreign gods' (Jer. 11:9–10). Jeremiah adds: '*(You shall say to them): it was because your fathers abandoned me, says the Lord, that they ran to worship foreign gods, serving them and abandoning me without observing my law. But you have done even worse than your fathers, for each of you follows the perversions and corruptions of your own heart, and refuses to listen to my voice. I will drive you out into a land you do not know, just as I did to your fathers, and there you will serve, night and day, foreign gods who will give you no* rest" (Jer. 16:11–13). It is written in Malachi: '*Judah has violated the law, and abomination has been seen in Israel and Jerusalem, for Judah, by marrying a woman who worshipped foreign gods, has defiled the people consecrated to the Lord, who were so*

'beloved' (Malachi 2:11). And in Micah: '*Nation shall walk in the name of the Lord, from one end of the earth to* the other' (Micah 4:5). And the Apostle says in *the Second Epistle to the Corinthians: 'If the Gospel we preach is still veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing; to the unbelievers whose minds the god of this age has blinded, so that they may not be enlightened by the glorious and resplendent light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God'* (2 Cor. 4:3–4). He affirms the same in *the First Epistle to the Corinthians: 'For though there may be so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and "lords"—yet for us there is but one* God' (1 Cor. 8:5–6). Christ says in the Gospel of St Matthew: *'No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other: you cannot serve both God and money (Mammon)*' (Matthew 7:24). Christ says again in the Gospel of St John: *'The* prince of this world is coming, but I have nothing in me that belongs to him' (John 14:30); and again: 'Now is the time when the world is to be judged; it is now that the prince of this world is to be cast out' (John 12:31); and again: 'For the prince of this world has already been judged' (John 16:11). The apostles said in their Acts: 'Why do the nations rage, and why do the peoples devise vain plans? The kings of the earth have risen up, and the princes have gathered together against the Lord and against Christ. For Herod and Pontius Pilate, together with the pagan nations and the tribes of Israel, have indeed gathered together in this city against your Son Jesus, consecrated by your anointing, etc.' (Acts, IV, 25–27). Thus it is clearly seen that proof of the existence of numerous gods, lords and princes, adversaries of the true Lord and of his Son Jesus Christ, can be found in the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures, which confirms what we had already demonstrated previously.

The sacred texts also speak of an evil eternity

We can also easily prove, from the testimony of Scripture, that for these lords and princes there is an eternity, a timelessness, a
'an antiquity' distinct from that which belongs to the true God. Christ says in the Gospel of St Matthew: '*(Then the King will say to those on his left): Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared by the devil and his angels'* (Matt. 25:41); and St Jude (the brother of James): *'He keeps them bound with everlasting chains in the deepest darkness, reserving for the judgement of the great day those angels who did not keep their original dignity, but abandoned their own* dwelling' (Jude 6–7). He says the same in the following verse: '*Likewise, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the neighbouring cities, which were overrun by excessive impurity and had attempted to overthrow the institution of nature, were set forth as an example of eternal fire by the punishments they* suffered' (Jude 7). The blessed Job also says to him: '*... where the shadow of death dwells, where all is in disorder and eternal* horror' (Job, X, 22). Through the mouth of Ezekiel, the Lord declares concerning Mount Seir: *'I will reduce you to eternal* desolation' (Ezek. 35:9); and, in the same chapter: *'Thus says the Lord your God: I am coming against you, O Mount Seir; I will stretch out my hand against you and make you desolate and abandoned.*

'I will lay waste your cities; you shall be laid waste, and you shall know that I am the Lord, because you have been the eternal enemy of the children of Israel and because you have pursued them with the sword in your hand during their distress, when their iniquity was at its height' (Ezekiel 35:3–5). This enemy of Israel is the Devil, who is also the enemy of the true God, as Jesus Christ himself pointed out in the Gospel of St Matthew (XIII, 25, 39). The Apostle says in *the Second Epistle* to the Thessalonians: '*... who will suffer the punishment of eternal* condemnation' (2 Thess. 1:9); and Christ, in the Gospel of St Matthew: *'And these will go into eternal* torment' (Matt. 25:46). Christ also says in the Gospel of St Mark: *'But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven, and will be eternally punished for this* sin' (Mark 3:29).

The prophet Habakkuk refers to the prophet's eternity in the following terms: 'God will come from the south, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covers the heavens, and the earth is full of his praise. He sends forth rays of living light; strength is in his hands. There his power is hidden. Death will go before him, and the devil will march ahead of him. He has stood still, he has measured the earth. He has looked upon the nations, he has melted them (like wax); the mountains have been reduced to dust. The hills of the world have been trampled under the feet of the eternal God' (Hab., III, 3–6).

Regarding the 'antiquity' of the Devil, we read in *Revelation: 'And that great dragon, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan… was cast down to the* earth' (Rev. 12:9). If, by describing them as eternal, everlasting, and ancient, one intends to assert that these essences have neither beginning nor end — as is certainly acknowledged to be true of the good God — we must likewise consider it demonstrated, by the testimonies cited above, that sin, punishments, anguish and error, fire and torments, chains and the Devil himself, had no beginning and will have no end. Whether these things are the names by which the supreme principle of evil is designated, or merely the names designating its *effects,* they bear witness, in any case, to the existence of a single cause of evil, eternal, everlasting or ancient; for if the effect is eternal, everlasting or ancient, it is absolutely necessary that the cause should be so too. There is, therefore, undoubtedly an evil principle from which this eternity, this sempiterness and this antiquity flow directly and essentially.

That there is another Creator or 'author'

I wish to make it clear that, according to the Scriptures, there is another God or Lord, who is the Creator and 'Author', apart from the One to whose faithfulness those who suffer whilst doing good entrust their souls. And I shall make this even clearer by adopting the viewpoint of our opponents, whilst respecting the trust they place in the Ancient Scriptures. Indeed, they publicly declare that this Lord is the Creator or Author who created and made the visible things of this world, namely: the heavens, the earth and the sea, men and animals, birds and *all reptiles,* as we read in *Genesis*: *'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and* empty' (Gen. 1:1–2). And further on: *'Then God created the great fish and every living creature that moves... and every bird, according to its* kind' (Gen. 1:21); and in verse 25: *'Then God made the animals*

'wild animals of the earth according to their kinds, domestic animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground, each according to its kind' (Gen. 1:25); and finally, in verse 27: *'So God created mankind in his own image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created* them' (Gen. 1:27). Christ also says in the Gospel of St Mark:
'But from the beginning of the world God made them male and female' (Mark 10:6).

We must bear in mind here that no one in this world can demonstrate the existence of this evil god in a clear and tangible way—nor, for that matter, of the good God—but that it is through the effect that the cause is known. That is why we must acknowledge that it is only possible to demonstrate the existence of an evil God or Creator through his evil deeds and his words full of inconsistency. Thus, I say that it was not the true Creator who made and organised the visible things of this world. And I shall prove it by his evil deeds and his deceitful words, if it is true that the works and words transmitted by the Ancient Scriptures were, in fact, done (and spoken) by him, in Time, materially and really, as our adversaries assert without the slightest hesitation.

We feel an indescribable horror at these works: they consist, in fact, in committing adultery, in stealing one's neighbour's goods, in blaspheming what is holy, in consenting to lies, in giving one's word with or without an oath, and in failing to keep it. These are abominable things done by the God in question, in this temporal world, and in a visible and concrete manner, if we adopt the viewpoint taken by our adversaries to interpret the Ancient Scriptures: they believe, in truth, that these Scriptures speak of the creation and organisation of this world, and of the works that were carried out in it in time, materially and visibly. And those who think that there is only one first principle are compelled to believe this. I shall demonstrate this through the Scriptures themselves, interpreted according to faith.

That the evil god committed the sin of fornication

This Lord and Creator commanded in Deuteronomy: 'If a man lies with another man's wife, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall die; and Israel shall be cleansed of evil' (Deut. 22:22). And again in Deuteronomy: 'A man shall not marry *his father's wife, nor uncover what modesty must* conceal' (Deut. 22:30). The Lord states in *Leviticus: 'You shall not uncover what ought to be hidden in your father's wife, for that would violate the respect due to your* father' (Lev. 18:8). And also: *'If a man abuses his stepmother, and violates the respect due to his father, both of them shall be put to* death' (Lev. 20:2).

Now, in violation of his own precepts, this Lord and Creator commanded, in this temporal world and in a manifest manner, that adultery be committed, carnally and in reality; and this according to the very belief and interpretation of our adversaries; in *the Second Book of Kings* we find the following expressed very clearly
— and we understand it as they do: the Lord and Creator himself says, in fact, to David through the mouth of the prophet Nathan: *'Why have you despised my word by committing such a crime? You have caused the death of Uriah the Hittite, you have stolen his wife, and you have remained*

with her; and you killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. That is why the sword will never depart from your house, because you have despised me and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite. The Lord says: 'I will bring evil upon you from within your own house. I will take your wives before your very eyes and give them to your nearest kinsmen, and they shall lie with them in the sight of this sun. You did this in secret, but I will do this before the eyes of all Israel' (2 Kings 12:9–12). From this we must conclude that, according to the law of our own adversaries, this god and creator either lied or committed adultery, as is plainly seen in the *Second Book of Kings,* according to the confession of our adversaries: *'Ahithophel said to Absalom: "Look at your father's concubines, who are in charge of his palace, so that when all Israel hears that you have dishonoured your father, they may be drawn more strongly to your side. So they set up a tent for Absalom on the roof of the king's palace; and he went in with his father's concubines in the sight of all* Israel' (Kings, XVI, 21–22). Thus did this Lord and Creator carry out this act of adultery (which he had declared he would carry out), in a real and visible manner, in this world (still according to the interpretation of our adversaries), and above all in violation of the precept which he himself had laid down—and which we recalled earlier—: *'If a man lies with another man's wife, etc.'* No sensible person will believe that it was the true Creator who gave
— in fact — a man's wives to his son — or to anyone else
— to commit the sin of fornication, as did the creator of the visible things of this world, as the ignorant maintain, and as we have shown previously. Let us recall that Our Lord, that true God, never commanded that adultery and fornication should be committed in this world. Indeed, the Apostle says in *the First Epistle to the Corinthians: 'Do not be deceived: neither fornicators nor adulterers will inherit the kingdom of* God' (1 Cor. 6:9–10). The same Apostle says to the Ephesians: *'Indeed, be convinced that no fornicator, no immoral person… will inherit the kingdom of Christ and of* God' (Eph. 5:5). And he says further to the Thessalonians: *'Indeed, God's will is that you should be holy; abstaining from the sin of* fornication' (1 Thess. 4:3). It was certainly not our true Creator who, in the temporal world, in this world, took David's wives and gave them to his closest relative, so that he might commit adultery, before Israel and in broad daylight, as seen in the passage quoted. It is therefore necessary, without a doubt, that there be another creator, the cause and origin of all fornication and all adultery in this world.

That the evil god commanded that one's neighbour's possessions be seized by force and that murder be committed

That the so-called Lord and Creator compelled them to forcibly take their neighbour's possessions and to actually steal—for their own benefit—the treasures of the Egyptians; that He compelled them to commit, in this material world, the gravest of murders, we are in a position to prove, with the utmost clarity, through the Ancient Scriptures, according to the faith of our opponents. The Lord Himself said to Moses in *Exodus*:
'Say therefore to all the people: Let every man ask his friend, and every woman her neighbour, for vessels of silver and gold; and the Lord will forgive his people in the sight of the Egyptians' (Exodus 11:2). It then states: 'The *children of Israel did as*

‘as Moses had commanded, and they asked the Egyptians for vessels of silver and gold, and many garments. And the Lord caused the Egyptians to look favourably upon his people, so that they gave them what they asked for, and thus they plundered the Egyptians’ (Exodus 12:35–26). In *Deuteronomy,* Moses says to his people: ‘*Before you lay siege to a town, first offer it terms of peace. If it accepts and opens its gates to you, all the people within it shall be spared and shall surrender, paying tribute. If it does not accept the terms of peace and instead declares war on you, it shall be besieged. And when the Lord delivers it into your hands, you shall put the men to the sword, but keep the women, the children and the livestock, and everything else found in the city. You shall divide the spoils among the whole army, and you shall eat the plunder of your enemies, which the Lord our God has given you. And so you shall do to all the towns that are far from you and do not belong to the inheritance allotted to you. But as for these cities which are to be given to you, you must not leave any of their inhabitants alive; they shall all be put to the sword, that is, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has* commanded you’ (Deut. 20:10–17). We also read in *Deuteronomy: ‘So Sihon marched against us with all his people to fight us at Jahaz; and the Lord delivered him into our hands, and we defeated him, along with all his children and all his people. We took all the towns, killed all their inhabitants—men, women and children—and left absolutely* nothing” (Deut. 2:32–34). And this too: “*The Lord our God also delivered Og, king of Bashan, and all his people into our hands; we killed them all without exception, and destroyed all the towns in one fell swoop. No city could escape us; we took sixty cities, the whole region of Argob, which was the kingdom of Og in Bashan, etc. We exterminated these peoples as we had done to Sihon, king of Heshbon, destroying all the towns, killing the men, women and children; and we took their flocks, along with the spoils of the* towns” (Deut., III, 3–4; 6–7).

Regarding the man who gathered wood on the Sabbath, the Book of *Numbers* states: ‘*Now, whilst the Israelites were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath; and they brought him to Moses, Aaron and all the people, and put him in custody, not knowing what to do with him. Then the Lord said to Moses: ‘This man shall be put to death; all the people shall stone him and drive him* out’ (Num. 15:32–35). The same Lord said to the Israelite people in *Exodus: ‘I will fulfil the number of your days. I will send my terror before you; I will exterminate all the peoples of the lands into which you enter, and all your enemies will flee before* you’ (Exodus 23:26–27). And thus it is written in *Leviticus: ‘You shall pursue your enemies, and they shall all fall before you. Five of you shall pursue a hundred, and a hundred of you shall pursue ten thousand*; *your enemies shall fall before you by the* sword’ (Lev. 26:7–8); and again, in the Book of *Numbers*: *‘If you do not put all the inhabitants of the land to death, those who remain will be like thorns in your eyes and like spears in your sides; they will fight against you in the land where you are to dwell; and I will bring upon you all the evil I had intended to bring upon* them’ (Num. 23:55–56).

'S CASTLE AT MONTSÉGUR

Montségur Castle (Ariège) was built, or rebuilt, on the ruins of an old fortress between 1205 and 1211, at the express request of the Cathar clergy, who undoubtedly intended to transform it into a spiritual centre and a place of refuge for the sect. Indeed, the castle fulfilled this dual role without interruption from 1209 to 1244, when it surrendered. One might expect to find there at least one room whose style and general layout had retained a 'flavour' of Catharism: this is not the case. The keep is similar to all keeps. Everything was designed with defence in mind. It is possible that the areas set aside for religious purposes were located outside, on the edge of the mountain, between the wall and the precipice, or further away, perhaps, on the site of the present-day village (which had not yet been built). But if they did exist, they were destroyed by the Inquisition, which ordered the demolition down to the foundations of any building that had harboured heretics.

All that remains is the castle's floor plan: M. Niel's theory is well known, according to which Montségur, like the keep at Quéribus and perhaps that at Cabaret (Lastours, Aude), was a kind of solar temple or, rather, a zodiacal calendar. 'It is an undeniable fact,' writes M. Niel, 'that when we stand in the exact spot and look in the chosen direction, we see, depending on the date, the sun rise precisely in that direction. Clearly, we do not believe this to be a coincidence. The likelihood that such a thing could have happened makes our heads spin. The event was, therefore, premeditated.' I do not know exactly what to make of this theory, which, at the very least, has the merit of highlighting unsettling coincidences in the layout of the various parts of the castle, although these are, to some extent, explainable by the harmonies necessarily developed throughout the aesthetic 'golden ratio'. Be that as it may — I am referring, in this case, to the simplest and most obvious of M. Niel — it is indisputable that the castle's axis — an approximate axis, for the castle is not symmetrical — coincides exactly with the north-south direction: and that this axis passes through two key points: the angle formed by the two northern walls and the angle formed by the two southern walls. But what is truly curious is that, whilst the angle formed by the two southern walls (in reality, south-eastern) is indeed a very acute angle, the one formed by the two north-eastern walls is so widely open that it generally goes unnoticed. So much so that the 13th-century architects felt they had to mark the break, the change of direction, with a fine vertical groove that runs, at this point, across all the stones of the outer façade. It is, as he states
M. Niel, of something premeditated. For, assuming that the architects had decided—we cannot see what other motive they might have had—to extend the castle's footprint eastwards, they could just as easily have done so by extending a straight façade in the same direction. If they had built this façade in the shape of an elbow, they would have achieved the same result by placing the angle at another point, and practically at any point. It is clear, therefore, that they intended to separate the two northern walls, or, better still, to divide the northern façade into

two to create a striking feature; or else that, compelled for some other reason not to place these walls in exact alignment with one another, they decided, at the very least, to situate the angle of divergence precisely to the north: a peculiarity that may be explained by practical requirements (maximising sunlight exposure?) or aesthetic considerations (correct orientation balancing the structure of the whole), or by a mystical concern to attribute a particular significance to the North... or to the South.

On the other hand — mystery lovers notwithstanding! — it would have been desirable, given the important role played by the pentagon in Cathar symbolism, for the castle to have been built on a pentagonal plan. All the more so because, in its main body and disregarding the keep, which is certainly older and to which it is attached, the shape of the (irregular) pentagon would be affected if, precisely, the north wall were not in fact composed of two walls. Thus, the castle, which could have had five sides, has six! Must we conclude that the architect added another wall so that Montségur would not be a pentagon? Or, as I have heard some enlightened minds argue, that the wall, which would necessarily have to be bent at an angle for practical reasons, was at least opened up as much as possible so that one could not see, especially from the inside, that there were two walls, and so that the castle would thus (at least in appearance) take the form of a pentagon? We could go on forever describing the true and false mysteries of Montségur. I have dwelled on these minor architectural puzzles merely so that the curious might get a sense of the complexity—partly real, partly imaginary—of the problems surrounding Montségur, which foster an atmosphere of more or less authentic enchantment.

The castle, however, has a distinctive appearance: there are no curved lines to be seen, except for the two arched gateways; no round towers, no arches on the façades. Only the turret has loopholes. As the mountain peaks are incorporated into the wall, and as the rocky ground of the courtyard has not even been levelled, the fortress must have given the impression, in the 13th century, of a kind of natural chaos in which the cubic stone barely balanced upon the rough rock. We sometimes wonder whether the architecture might not have been intended to protect the rock? Was there an ancient Iberian or Celtic sanctuary on the site? A place traditionally venerated? It is pointless to dwell too much on the matter. Far too cramped, sparsely furnished, and very uncomfortable, Montségur Castle resembles, in this respect, all the keep-like structures of the Pyrenees from the same period. Yet it possesses a distinctly more imposing character, owing to its bare façade, the rows of regular stones, and the monumental gate—somewhat unusual, somewhat too large for a castle
‘wild’ and so poorly defended: a gateway for souls to pass through! If it was not a temple – ‘a fortress for the victors, a temple for the vanquished’, as the poet Joê Bousquet put it – it would certainly deserve to be one. It brings to mind a fortified convent, a magical castle of some sort of ‘Templars’. Imaginative minds, unconcerned with historical accuracy or chronology, confuse it, not without a certain exaltation, with the legendary Castle of the Grail, although it

it possesses any hall vast enough to easily accommodate the famous procession of the 'Chalice, the Abacus and the Lance', described by Chrétien de Troyes and Wolfram d'Eschenbach. Let us add, finally, that no one can fail to be struck by the more Nordic than southern aspect of the mountainous landscape that surrounds it. 'From here,' writes Otto Rahn in **La Cour de Lucifer**, 'I see high mountains very similar to the Bavarian Alps, fir forests, snow-covered pastures. It is in this northern guise that the South appears to me; this is how I came to know it.'

MONTSÉGUR AND PARAPSYCHOLOGY

Among the many traditions circulating in Montségur and the surrounding region, the strangest is the one concerning the Chinese, or rather, the 'Tibetans'. I am simply setting out the facts as they stand, without attempting to elaborate on them or, above all, to explain them.

1) It is said in the Lavelanet region that the Inquisitors pursued heretics as far as Tibet.

2) The engineer A. A..., who was conducting research in Montségur in 1932, and to whom Otto Rahn refers in his book *(Luzifers Hofgesinde),* was in contact with spirits and invoked the *Tibetan masters.*

3) M. P..., from Lavelanet, known to all the regulars at the Couquet hotel in Montségur, has told me on several occasions—and repeats to anyone who will listen—that one day, having entered the underground passage dug out beneath the castle by the engineer A... whilst the latter was away, he suddenly found himself face to face with the apparition of three Tibetans. The apparition lasted a few minutes... Mr P... is a serious, educated man and sceptical in every respect. This phenomenon made a deep impression on him and he has never been able to explain it.

4) Recently, a very receptive young man, who easily enters into communication with so-called 'spirits' and with the masters, went to Montségur, completely unaware of the Tibetan mystery that reigns there, and was extremely surprised to receive a message dictated in oriental characters, which he showed me and whose translation is currently being carried out.

We must conclude from all this, like the occultists, that Montségur is 'visited' by the Tibetans, or, like the parapsychologists, that the engineer A... evoked, in his underground chamber, a mental image—an 'egregore' brought into the physical world—which sensitives can still perceive under certain circumstances?

But there is something else: I have always been struck by the page in *Luzifèrs Hofgesinde* where Otto Rahn, recounting his visit in 1932 to Arthur Caussou of Lavelenaet, says exactly the following: 'He (A. Caussou) also told me — which greatly astonished me — that one of his friends, now deceased, had found in the ruins of Montségur a book written in Chinese or Arabic characters, he was not quite sure; and that this book had subsequently disappeared'.

Now, as recently as three months ago (in January 1971), Ch. Delpoux, author of excellent studies on Catharism, showed me the notebook that had been given to him by a person from Montségur. This notebook, which belonged to A. A..., is nothing more than a copy made by this engineer in 1930 — he wrote on the last page: 'Certified true copy, A. A..., Montségur, December 1930'
— from another notebook in which Dr J. Guibaud, of Lavelanet, had recorded, between 1852 and 1872, his archaeological and other reflections on Montségur. I am publishing the pages of this manuscript that pertain to the Tibetan mystery of Montségur, without altering anything.

The manuscript of Dr J. Guibaud

«...But the most surprising object, given its presence, which has reportedly been discovered, is a book bound in parchment, currently in the possession of the resident of Montségur whom we have just mentioned, and which I have not had the good fortune to see, which prevents me from confirming this. I possess,
·However, one page of this book appears to be written in Chinese characters. It is a large-format page, in-16. At the top are two figures, bareheaded, sitting side by side beside a tree whose trunk and branches are covered in strange vegetation. The branches extending from it are arranged in a radiating pattern and are bare of leaves. The grasses emerging from the ground on which the two figures are seated and the hills in the engraving display the same radiating patterns; as for the fallen leaves, they appear to belong to the Crassulaceae family. The two figures, who appear younger than adults, are easily recognisable as Chinese men in loose-fitting robes, with prominent bellies cinched by a sash, and long, curved nails adorning their fingers; one can also easily recognise the strongly pronounced Tartar features, with a broad, triangular face, prominent cheekbones, a pointed chin, and eyes set wide apart and slanted obliquely.

'These two figures are holding a book—or rather, a letter—wider than it is long, which we see only from the back, framed and adorned with unrecognisable designs. The engraving and the characters on the sheet appear, from their greyish colour, to have been printed with sepia or Indian ink; they are framed by simple lines. The characters form twelve lines, each containing eight symbols, well spaced and symmetrically aligned both vertically and horizontally.

'Here follows the account of the person who gave me this sheet. Having gone to Montségur some thirty years ago, he had the opportunity to meet the collector we spoke of, his friend. In addition to medals and weapons, the latter showed him the Chinese book in question and, during a moment of distraction, took from him—due to the strangeness of the characters—the sheet that serves as the pretext for these lines.

'I find it difficult to explain how a Chinese book could have been discovered amongst the ruins of this castle situated in the middle of the countryside and, let us be clear, on one of the highest peaks of the Ariège mountains. We would fully understand the presence of this volume amongst the ruins of a castle on the coast of

France, brought by a sailor in contact with China, or salvaged from the wreckage of a shipwreck, or as booty from a pirate junk.

'I prefer to believe it was a prank, a hoax by a resident of Montségur played on the person who gave me the page—who, though very intelligent, is no expert in such matters and must have been taken in by the ruse…'.

OTTO RAHN

THE COURT OF LUCIFER (*Luzifers Hofgesinde,* 1937)

1) ...It was then that I decided on the title of this work, which I am pondering and writing: *Luzifers Hofgesinde* (the 'household' or the Court of Lucifer). By this title I would like you to understand, from the outset, the whole of those who, seeking law and equity, found beyond the Ten Commandments of Moses the strength, justice and meaning of life; and who, independent and proud and expecting no aid from Mount Sinai, sought help and comfort — sometimes without even being aware of it — from a 'Mountain of Gathering' in the 'farthest midnight', so that they might, in turn, pass on this help and comfort to their kinsmen; the society, ultimately and essentially, of all those who understood that Jehovah could not be their God, nor Jesus of Nazareth their Saviour. In the House of Lucifer there are also 'many dwellings'. Various paths, various 'bridges' lead to them... (p. 58).

2) *Dialogue with the Cathar*

In my mind's eye I see men and women of the 12th and 13th centuries walking along the road. They file past me, one after the other...

I ask one of them: 'What's your name?' He is no longer a young man. His hair is grey, his face pale. He is wearing a long black robe covered in dust and with frayed hems. He walks with a light step. 'My name is Bertran and I'm from the Foix region. — Where are you heading? — To the Rhine, or even further,' he replies simply.

'Are you a heretic?' 'I am,' says the man, staring intently at me. 'Did you flee to escape some danger?' 'I am an outlaw and I am fleeing from the Romans.' 'I know your land.' 'I know, but you have not seen it well enough.' The man continues to speak in his own tongue: 'I was a knight. You spent a night, travelling by carriage, near the ruins of my castle; but you didn't look up: you were busy reading a book. You ought to read less and see and hear more... My castle was built on a hill, near Foix; not far from and opposite Montségur... The inquisitors ordered my brother, his wife and children to be burned, whilst I was away from the castle. I had gone to Ornolhac to celebrate the winter solstice in the mountains, not far from the underground church you visited in the Pyrenees, near Mount Susa where the 'path of the heretics' passes. We call this festival *Nadai* (Christmas).' I interrupted him: 'It was the birth of Jesus of Nazareth

‘So they celebrated it with solemnity and reverence?’ ‘No, not at all,’ he replied, ‘it was the birth of the Sun-God. Some among us called him Christ, just as the Greeks had done before the Christian era. But this Christ has nothing in common with Jesus.’ Jesus was a Jew, and a sectarian Jew at that. It was the faithful who, after his death, proclaimed him the Saviour and identified him with the Sun! Bishop Méliot, of the city of Sardis in Asia Minor, was right when he claimed, in the early days of Christianity, that the doctrine of Christ was not a revealed religion, but a philosophy known at first only amongst the barbarians, and which subsequently spread under Emperor Augustus, undergoing changes. Later, it took advantage of the expansion of the Roman Empire to spread throughout the world. In other words: Jerusalem and Rome appropriated the doctrine of Christ to serve their own ends. — So be it! — However, the idea that Christ lived an earthly life and died on the cross is truly Jewish: an insult, moreover, to the Divinity — Why? — Because it contradicts the idea of conceiving the Divinity as a personal being — Who is God? — God is the spirit, the light and the force — Is there an anti-God? — Yes, it is the weakness that acts upon men, such as falsehood and doubt. It is also the disordered spirit, the spirit of destruction’.

> ‘Lucifer, whom you call Lucibel, is he not, to you, the Devil? Who, then, is he?

— Lucifer is nature as you see it within yourself, around you and above you. It is twofold: it is the Earth without light, and also the Heaven of light, which bestows life. — Is Lucifer your God? — Why do you speak of God and not of Divinity? This notion of God implies a personal representation. My German contemporaries, as you should know, always refer to the Divinity *as* the *Gott*. Biblical concepts, whether you like it or not, have warped your mind. — Is Lucifer, then, your Divinity? — No, he is a mediator. — Does man need a mediator? — Yes, but not a mediator who sets him free: a mediator who simply presents himself as a model and an example. Lucifer is also the Sun. You need him to have the will to live, and also to accept death... In winter, the Sun dies; in spring, it is reborn and renewed. It brings with it the light of life and the certainty that is the opposite of uncertainty. — The certainty of rebirth? — Yes, if you prefer; it would be more correct to say: victory over death, immortality.

‘Look at yourself now,’ says the man. I obey and hear within me two voices at war. One says to the other: ‘Be silent! You say yes to life, to this fleeting life. You surrender to the mirage of this existence, to this world, to these illusory things. What is life? Sorrows, toil, sickness and death. What is the world? The cornucopia of unhappiness, a valley of tears, the enclosed arena where passions clash. And things, what are they? Imperfect, destructible and changeable matter, doomed from the outset to corruption and destruction. And even the stars that exalt you, in your joy of living, will one day cease to exist. Death awaits them, too. Nothing you perceive through the senses is lasting or divine, for only God is eternal. There is but one certainty: Death. And it is upon this rock that you intend to build your temple!”

But a second voice rises up: ‘I say: yes’. I shall continue to affirm my powerful and courageous ‘yes’. It was no accident that the Divinity created this world — I am certain of it — and all visible things, and myself. It is this certainty that, for me, sanctifies everything: the stars, the elements and, above all, the patch of earth on which the Divinity has allowed me to contemplate the light of the world: my homeland and my tribe. The Divinity has granted me life; I trust in life. I am myself. But I would be nothing without my tribe; my tribe would not exist without my homeland; and my homeland would not exist without the Divinity.”

The first voice then replies: ‘The Divinity has no closer connection with your homeland than with that of any other man. Before the Divinity, all men and all peoples are equal.’ And the second voice did not know how to reply.

But the grey-haired man speaks again: ‘My homeland has vanished. It has been reduced to a field of ruins, and, on the Pope’s orders, they have prepared it to be “regenerated”. We were defeated because we denied Jehovah, the God of the Jews, Moses and the prophets. We do not pray to the God of the Jews precisely because the Divinity has no more connection with the Jewish people than with any other people. Only the Jews had the audacity to express this proud certainty of being God’s chosen people. Who is Yahweh, if not the very soul of the Jewish people—arrogant, intolerant, vengeful, power-hungry and devoid of chivalrous generosity? The soul of my people was very different. Our God was transparent, luminous, full of nobility. He represented, in his perfection, what we embody in an imperfect manner. — Why do you, the heretics who have received the *consolamentum,* call yourselves perfect and pure? Is it not pride that takes hold of such names? — We called ourselves that to mark our opposition to Rome, which claims that all men — whatever their blood — are vile, corrupt and impure. As descendants of our Hellenic and Gothic ancestors, we felt noble and by no means vile or wretched, and though we were estranged from the Divinity, we were neither corrupt nor disconnected from the divine. We felt no need for the God of Rome. We knew full well that we had our own. We had no need of Moses’ commandments: we carried within us the laws bequeathed by our ancestors. Moses was imperfect and impure. Otherwise, he would not have chosen his wife from among the Arabs; he would not have brought down upon the brothers who offended him the wrath of God, who sent them leprosy! Moses was what the Jews are, who seek to impose their faith upon us: imperfect and impure men, enslaved and mixed-blood souls. We, men of Nordic blood, we, men of the West, call ourselves ‘Cathars’, just as the men of Nordic blood in the East called themselves Parsis, the pure ones. I hope you understand me; if not, it is because your blood is impure! — The Parsis? — Yes, the Parsis, the Aryans, and we, the Cathars, have never betrayed our blood. Therein lies the secret you seek to uncover at all costs: that of the bonds that link them to one another. Take this to heart: if you wonder about Parzival, know that it is an Iranian word meaning ‘the pure flower’. If you seek the Grail, remember that the Grail is the sacred stone, the Ghral of the Parsis. And whoever is called to see the Grail, know that they are already known in heaven. You have read all this in Wolfram von Eschenbach. Our heaven calls to itself only those who are not creatures of the race

inferior, bastards or slaves: the Aryans. Their name means that they are noble and lords'.

I looked up. I was alone.

(*La Cour de Lucifer*, French translation
by R. Nelli, pp. 194–201.)

BERSERKER
BOOKS